


THE KING'S ENGLISH BOOKSHOP
MATCHING BOOKS TO READERS SINCE 1977
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Salt Lake City, UT 84105
801-484-9100

THE Inkslinger

 The King's English Review of Books

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KEEP UTAH INDEPENDENT

Spring Issue 2021

The King's English to Open April 1—No Fooling!

There aren't words to tell you how we've missed you all this past year or how we've longed to open our doors. And now, suddenly, with the state's vaccine program proceeding way ahead of predictions, we've realized that we finally can—that with some physical changes in the store we can maintain a safe environment inside The King's English despite the impossibility of social distancing! These changes include (in addition to a thorough cleaning and a fresh coat of paint), two additional fans, air purifiers, plexiglass barriers at the cash registers, double masks on employees, and screens on the doors (and, eventually, the windows) so that we can maintain constant cross-ventilation now that spring is here.

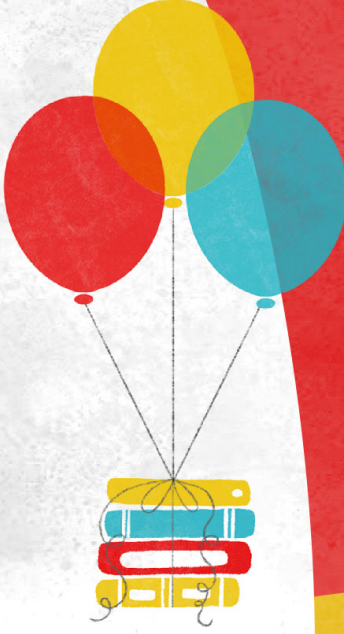
We only wish we could announce a grand opening. We do intend to celebrate Independent Bookstore Day on April 24 (see below), spilling out onto the sidewalks and the back patio to accommodate the crowds, but we hope to open our doors well before that—and no, this isn't an April Fools' Day joke—on April 1! That's the good news.

The not-so-good news is that our strategy for keeping you safe will not, alas, allow a large crush of customers on that or any other day. We intend to keep a stack of shopping baskets just inside the front door, so pick one up when you come in (one basket lets in mom, dad and two kids). Or, if you can see through the glass door that no baskets remain, please wait outside until one is returned by a happy shopper on his or her way out.

When you do come in (masked, of course) you'll be offered sanitizer and will see signs intended to keep the numbers of people in any one room to a minimum. We hope this all sounds safe to you. Just to make sure, we wish to ask you a few questions and hear your ideas and suggestions—in the form of a survey.

You will receive this survey via email and social media, but we are including it in the *Inkslinger* so that those of you who don't spend much time online will see it. Whether you wish to fill it out with pen and paper (in which case you can just remove page 2 and return it to the box in the front of TKE's Book Shack in our parking lot—or put it in the mail) or to answer the questions online, either on our website or when you receive a link to the survey, we hope you can take a minute to do so.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to answer our questions. The more informed we are about what makes you feel safe—and also what we're doing now that you think we could improve upon—the better equipped we will be to make a decision about when and how to fully open, removing the limit on customers in the store at a given time and perhaps restoring our old hours (presently we plan to be open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Saturday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sundays). We appreciate your incredible support and patience with our efforts at running a warehouse operation, but with good weather on the way and vaccination counts on the rise, we do believe the time to open is finally here.




Saturday, April 24th

INDEPENDENT BOOKSTORE DAY

When you spend \$15 or more at our bookstore on April 24th, you'll get a free audiobook from Libro.fm.

Learn more at www.libro.fm/ibd

 Libro.fm

COVID Survey

COVID SAFETY

- Which will make shopping inside TKE feel more comfortable to you? (Circle all that apply)
 - The staff is double-masked.
 - All customers wear masks.
 - Plexiglass barriers are used at the cash desk.
 - Ventilation is improved (screen doors, fans, air purifiers).
 - The number of customers inside the store at a given time is limited.
 - Other.
- Once you've received the vaccine will you feel less hesitant about shopping at TKE regardless of social distancing as long as everyone wears masks? Yes___ No___ Not sure___
- We won't yet be open for inside shopping in March, but would you be comfortable attending sidewalk sales once the weather improves if everyone wears masks? Yes___ No___ Not sure___
- Are you presently comfortable picking up books in TKE's Book Shack? Yes___ No___ Not sure___
- Once we do open would you still like the convenience of the Book Shack? Yes___ No___ Not sure___
- Once we open would you continue to order online frequently as a part of your book buying?
Yes___ No___ Not sure___
- Are there any other conditions we could create inside or outside of the store that would make you feel safer? Or that would make shopping with us more convenient?

CUSTOMER PROFILE

- Age_____ Gender_____
- Home zip code_____
- How frequently do you order books at TKE?
- Do you presently prefer to order via phone, email or the website (please circle)?
- Will you continue to order online once we are open? (Circle one) Frequently? Seldom? Never?
- Before we closed for COVID how frequently did you shop at TKE? (Please circle) Weekly, monthly, once or twice a year.

COMMUNICATION

- Which do you consider most valuable in receiving information about books TKE carries or is recommending? (Please circle)
 - The Inkslinger*
 - Weekly IndieBound emails
 - Social media
 - Other
- How do you most frequently receive information about TKE's events? Please rank
 - The event emails
 - Social media
 - TKE's Website
 - The Inkslinger*
 - Other
- What types of social media do you use? Please circle all that apply
 - Facebook
 - Instagram
 - Twitter
- Do you read the *Inkslinger*, and, if you do, do you (please circle):
 - Download from email?
 - Pick up at TKE?
 - Download from our website?

Bestselling Audiobooks Across Genres





Easter Is Early!



While the Easter Bunny is quarantined, let us help with your holiday gifts! For a flat fee of \$50, we will send you a book, a spring stuffed animal, and an additional toy, game, or diary. Priority shipping is included. No kids? No problem! We're happy to make you an adult Easter basket too! \$50 will get you a paperback book and a non-book item or two from the store (mug, game, dishtowel, who knows!?).

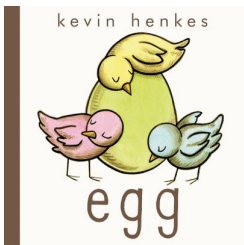
In your order comments, please leave the age and some interests of the child you're buying for—same for adults, but age not necessary. We cannot facilitate all requests but will try our best!

Supplies are limited! Basket not included but a brown bag and pastel ribbon and tissue are!

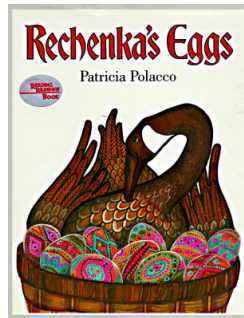
In order to get these packages to you in time for Easter, please place your order by noon on Wednesday, March 31st.



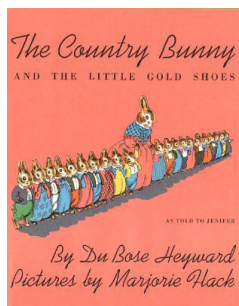
Egg,
Kevin Henkes



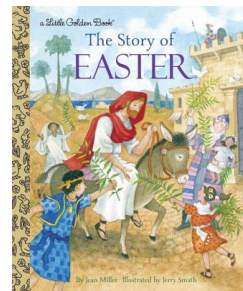
Rechenka's Eggs,
Patricia Polacco



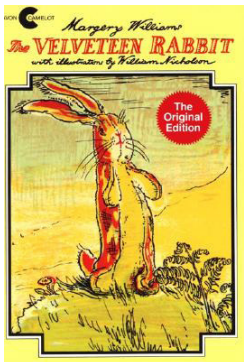
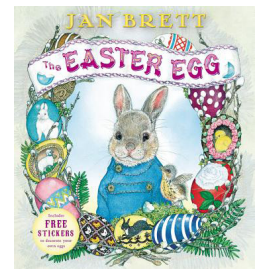
The Country Bunny and the Little Gold Shoes,
Du Bose Heyward



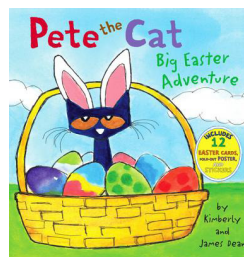
The Story of Easter,
Jean Miller



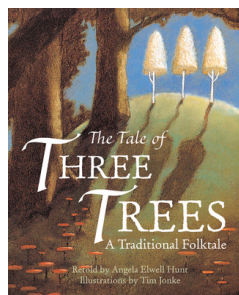
The Easter Egg,
Jan Brett



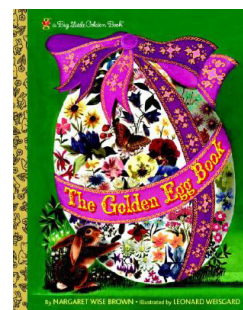
The Velveteen Rabbit,
Margery Williams



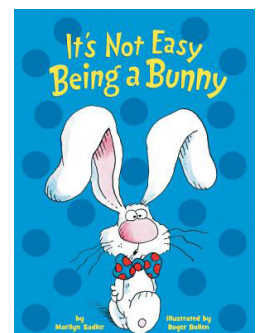
Pete the Cat: Big Easter Adventure,
Kimberly and James Dean



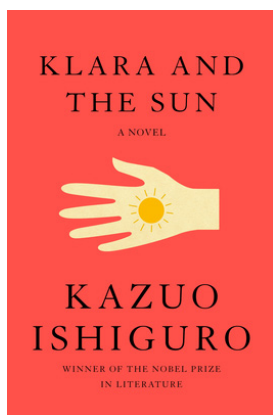
The Tale of the Three Trees,
Angela Hunt



The Golden Egg Book,
Margaret Wise Brown



It's Not Easy Being a Bunny,
Marilyn Sadler



Klara and the Sun: A Novel,
Kazuo Ishiguro

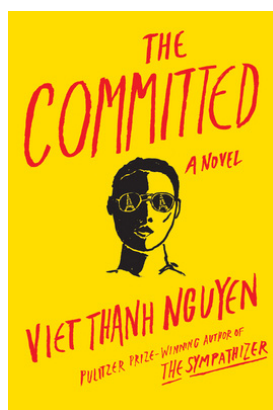
In some future world teenagers are paired with an AF (artificial friend). Klara, the AF and narrator of Ishiguro's magnificent new novel, is considered exceptional in her abilities to observe and respond to all situations. When she is finally paired with Josie, Klara's world as an AF is expanded in ways she never contemplated. She is perceptive and unusually (for an AF) empathetic, but is she capable of imitating human love? The novel looks at whether

an artificial being can be transformed to replace a human being given all the emotions (and soul) that such a transformation would require. Through Klara's voice Ishiguro explores what constitutes a human being and challenges the reader to do so as well. Brilliant.

– Barbara Hoagland, Knopf, \$28

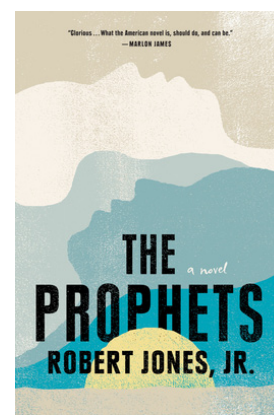
The Committed, Viet Thanh Nguyen

Now “reeducated” by his best friend and blood brother Man, our nameless ex-triple agent (see *The Sympathizer*, the first volume of his “confessions”), has made his weary, sorrowful way to Paris in the company of his also blood brother and longtime friend Bon. Was the revolution right or wrong? What of those who participated in it? Wrote of it? Fought it? Fought for it underground? Bon knows what he thinks: he has spent his lifetime killing communists. But having spent his adult lifetime as a spook, sleeper, spy, the middle “blood brother,” now haunted by ghosts, crippled by remorse, wracked with doubt, fearful that Bon will find out what he's done, who he is, knows not what to think. Except that his brain has separated into two parts, his self into two pieces. And that despite disenchantment with the ways the revolution has played out, he still feels in sympathy with parts of it. With parts, it still seems, of many things. He stays with his “aunt” (his handler in former days, actually Man's aunt) and recognizes in her friends and colleagues a ripe source for doing harm to those with whom he does not sympathize. And because he and Bon have also been told to contact “The Boss,” he has the means: drugs. So the plot thickens into a rous of violence, philosophy, hypocrisy, desperation and treachery as he acts his way into and out of nearly constant chaos and danger, writes his way into and out of wavering sanity, able to sympathize with so many, to understand so little. What is he committed to? Committed for? BOOM! He says, in describing his birth, product of a Vietnamese mother (whom he loved) and a French father (whom he loathes). And BOOM is an apt description for this detonation of words that sob and scream, weep for, tear at the fabric of politics and philosophy, of belief and its opposite. – Betsy Burton, Grove, \$27

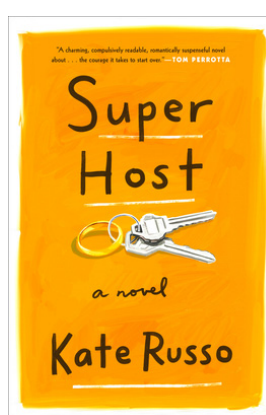


The Prophets, Robert Jones Jr.

An ambitious, compelling and painful debut novel about two enslaved queer men, *The Prophets* is told in lyric, dense prose reminiscent of Toni Morrison or Colson Whitehead. Samuel and Isaiah are opposites, yet completely bonded—and united—in their love. A love that threatens to upset the balance of the plantation's other slaves and the duties expected of them from their white masters. When Amos, the self-appointed leader of their community, and the women who surround them cannot convince the lovers to conform and perform the task they have been groomed for, their hard-sought harmony is brought close to destruction. Biblical in its telling, its voices ancestral and mythic, enthralling and frightening, this has a conclusion as stunning as its prose. – Anne Stewart Mark, Putnam, \$27



Super Host, Kate Russo



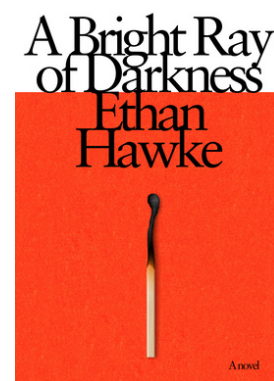
The still point around which Russo's sparkling debut novel revolves is the love once-famous artist Bennett Driscoll feels for his 19-year-old daughter—an abiding affection based not on control as is so commonly the case, but on respect. That she returns his warm regard casts a positive light on Bennett's less positive behavior: his spying for one thing (he frames it differently, but call it what it is) on the three successive female tenants who occupy the AirBed Bennett operates

in what used to be his home (and that of his ex-wife); his OCD determination to keep the sheets in the Airbed and his reputation as a “Super Host” equally pristine; his failure to recognize for far too long the things that make the girlfriend he has at long last found worth fighting for—and worth painting. A benison for an artist once short-listed for the Turner Prize who years ago turned from painting the nudes for which he was known to creating the fruit still-lives he stacks against the wall of his studio. As everyone from Bennett to his tenants to his girlfriend and ex-wife is forced to face, one way or another, unwelcome truth, the various attempts at evasion result in scenes that range from anxiety-producing to hilarious, shocking to tender as they pull us from the streets and art galleries of London to its posh suburbia. A wonderful debut from a hugely talented new novelist.

– Betsy Burton, Putnam, \$27

A Bright Ray of Darkness, Ethan Hawke

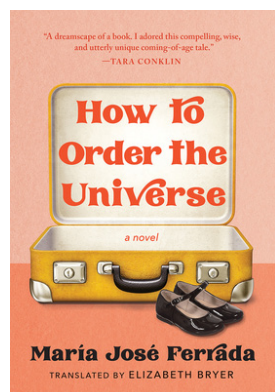
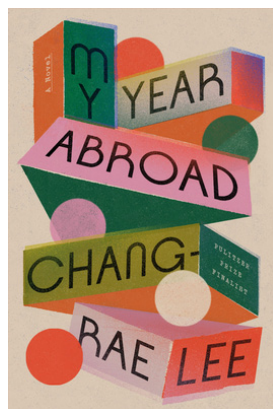
Self-absorbed, indulgent actor William Harding's life is falling apart. A very publicized one-night stand causes his rock-star wife to file for divorce. His 8- and 3-year-old children are confused, his smoking habit is affecting his once-strong voice, his stash of cocaine is dwindling, he can't sustain any romantic relationship—but at least he's making his Broadway debut. As Harding navigates the fiery role



of Hotspur in Henry IV, he takes comfort in the fact that although his personal life may be disintegrating, he can still depend on his acting. As the play progresses however, Harding feels less and less sure of himself as an actor and reluctantly faces the fact that no matter how brilliant fame feels, it is nothing compared to knowing and forgiving yourself. In a truly gorgeous love letter to live theatre, Hawke guides William Harding towards the realization that maybe the bravest, most healing thing we can do is realize we are not always the 'good guy' in the story—that facing the reality of our darkest fears and insecurities may be the kindest thing we can do for ourselves. – Anne Louise Brings, Knopf, \$27.95

My Year Abroad, Chang-rae Lee

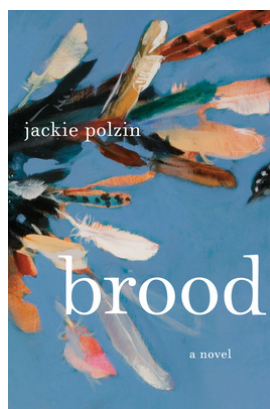
New York Times' reviewer Dwight Garner disliked *My Year Abroad* for all the reasons I loved it: food is at its epicenter. So is sex. And perhaps more central than anything else, something Garner disdainfully labels "fluky," is its sense of joie de vivre—its resounding, rip-roaring zest for, curiosity about, reaction to (whether that reaction be elation or anguish) the fruits of the world. Tiller, a young man who has grown up in an ironically (if fondly) portrayed suburban American community, is pretty much a blank slate—affable, needy, part Asian but not struggling with his identity—almost without identity, who is thinking of where he might pursue his academic 'year abroad.' He falls under the influence of a charismatic Chinese entrepreneur whom he follows to Asia, and what Tiller experiences under his new friend's tutelage in terms of Asian culture, Asian cuisine, and not least the Asian business community is interspersed with the aftermath of that year, lived with a woman nearly old enough to be the mother he can barely remember—a woman whom he met (where else?) in a food court. Her son at age 8 becomes, not to reveal too much plot, a wunderkind chef. Food again. Improbable? Deliciously so. In one sense this often humorous and as often harrowing novel is a coming-of-age story as Tiller's personal journey takes him from mildly curious to grandiose to craven to heroic during his picaresque year abroad and his subsequent search for safety. Revelatory in terms of exploitation, racism, corruption, it also plumbs the depths of human cruelty, human love. Speaking of love, unlike Mr. Garner, I did love *My Year Abroad*. – Betsy Burton, Riverhead, \$28



How to Order the Universe, Maria José Ferrada, translated by Elizabeth Bryer

My 2021 Reading Resolutions—more female authors, more translations. This book ticks both boxes, and sits atop of my "Best of 2021." M, the narrator, recalls in short bursts the year she was 7—a year spent traveling town to town with her salesman father, aiding and also abetting. She puzzles over childhood confusions and traumas, not unlike Scout in *To Kill a Mockingbird* or Addie in *Paper Moon*. (Coincidentally, both movies M and her father watch clandestinely on their "truant" days.) Set in Chile during

the Pinochet years, M's world has been set askew by a politics she doesn't comprehend. "I experienced a strange feeling...A sadness that, even though you feel it, doesn't belong to you." A photographer friend looks to capture ghosts in his pictures and steam from a bowl of soup that morphs into "a procession of ghosts"—coping mechanisms centered in the traditions of Garcia Marquez, Allende and Borges. After the year we've had, a little magic with our realism might be just what we all need. – Becky Thomas, Tin House, \$19.95

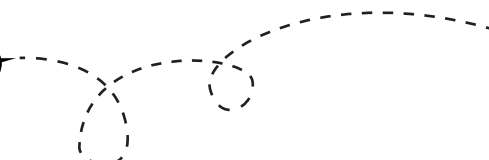


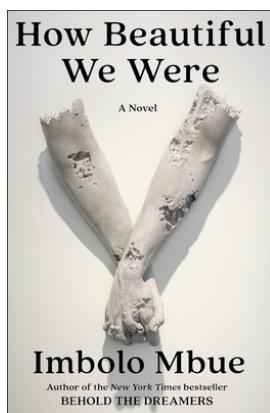
Brood, Jackie Polzin

Something to crow about! A novel with chickens clucking their way across every page yet neither a poultry nor self-help manual but rather a wry sometimes pungent (in every sense of the word) and wickedly honest novel so closely observed that small epiphanies constantly arise, fully formed, from its page-long "chapters." Chickens, it turns out, can inform our lives if we take the trouble to observe. And to brood. Whether about the weather, hawks, food foraging or relationships (yes, chickens do have relationships) from a fowl's point of view. There is much to ponder in *Brood*. And much to love. A year in the life of a nameless woman trying to keep a small brood of chickens, a quasi-happy marriage, a perhaps too self-reliant mother, and a give-and-take friendship alive through Minnesota's often brutal seasons, told in a voice reminiscent of Jenny Offill but somehow wholly original (I mean, chickens?), this is the tale of a woman who sees and muses, is amused and sometimes ambushed—by grief or by naked realization. Frequently startling, as often touching—or illuminating in a slyly understated way—Polzin's book makes one think.... Hmm, maybe it is time to try chickens. Or perhaps better (and certainly easier), keep her puckish voice and fresh perspective alive in one's own head and heart while performing life's daily tasks. I doubt they'll ever seem half so "daily" if you do. – Betsy Burton, Doubleday, \$24

A Thousand Ships, Natalie Haynes

"Sing, Muse" of the ways Calliope is over it. Impatient with poets writing the same old war stories over and over again, this muse is now telling them all in a way befitting her own perspective and that of all the women hidden inside the Trojan War, goddesses and mortals alike. Natalie Haynes has crafted a sweeping tale that flits into every corner of the hearth during wartime, unearthing domestic tragedies that can only be described as epic, cathartic and fresh. While I've read a lot of Greek retellings lately, I am delighted this one has been added to the canon. Proof there is still more to discover in these ancient tales. – Michaela Riding, Harper, \$27.99





How Beautiful We Were, Imbolo Mbue
(Available March 23)

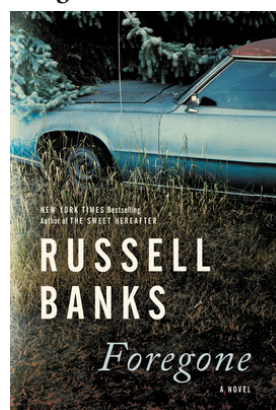
Kosawa, the novel's setting, is fictional. The depredations of a fictional American oil company, however, its appropriation of an African village's hunting ground, farmland, and water supply and the ensuing consequences—illness, political havoc, disappearance of community, environmental disaster and, ultimately, many, many deaths—could not have been wrought more truthfully were this non-fiction. Told from the multiple perspec-

tives of villagers living in Kosawa, Mbue's story highlights one young woman whose own vision leads her community's struggle to stand up and demand what's owed to them. Mbue is from Cameroon. Her first novel, *Behold the Dreamers*, won the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction. *How Beautiful We Were*, her second novel, is a must-read! Right now! – Michelle Macfarlane, Random, \$28

Trio, William Boyd

My favorite character in this deliciously satiric take on the swinging '60s in Brighton, England's then-version of Hollywood, is Elfrida Wing, a novelist who, years before, had taken to drink and married a skirt-chasing director when reviewers compared her first two novels to the work of Virginia Woolf (Wing loathed Woolf's books). My sympathies were likewise engaged by producer Talbot Kydd, whose true loves, men, appear only in his dreams so used is he to living in denial. And by Anny Viklund, the lovely (and naïve by any definition of the word) ingénue recently enamored of her equally clueless leading man. As the film in which this trio of flawed but likeable people is involved (however tangentially) reels on, the secrets the players harbor, far more complex than those in the movie's inane plot, begin to tangle and knot in ways that ultimately involve, among others, the FBI and the CIA. Wildly entertaining one minute, achingly sad the next, *Trio* is so much fun to read its overall heft catches the reader unaware. One more wonderful example of the virtuosity and versatility of the hugely talented William Boyd. – Betsy Burton, Knopf, \$27.95

Foregone, Russell Banks

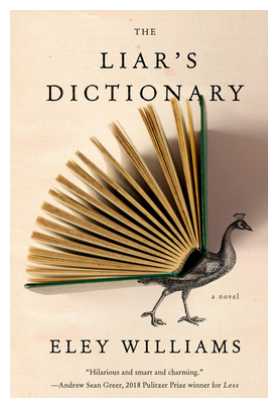
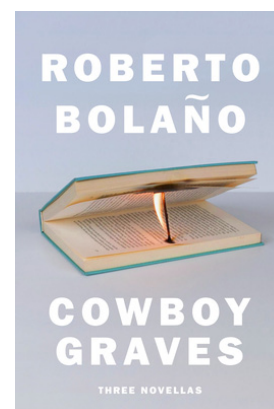


Pulitzer Prize nominee Russell Banks presents the astounding account of Leonard Fife: a leftist Canadian documentary filmmaker once known as a revolutionary draft-dodger who is now dying of cancer and has acquiesced to one last interview. His former student Malcolm MacLeod has come prepared with a crew and questions to document the artistic process and history of Fife's filmmaking, but Leonard has other plans. Told in a first-person, stream-of-consciousness narrative, what begins as a "pre" post-mortem of an

extraordinary artist becomes his final agonizing, dark confession. This difficult, weaving novel examines how memory crafts identity, love, and honesty as the film crew and Fife's wife Emma witness his desperate grasp for absolution. – Anne Louise Brings, HarperCollins, \$28.99

Cowboy Graves, Roberto Bolaño

Posthumous additions to the Bolaño canon multiply like loaves and fishes, keeping his multitude of fans well fed. The author's alter ego, Arturo Bolaño, reappears in *Cowboy Graves*, along with recurring autobiographical plot lines of family, revolution and homeland. "Hazy" memories twist and turn, producing the persistent rewritings and iterations that define the Bolaño oeuvre. In the middle novella, the one written closest to Bolaño's death, a young poet answers a ringing pay phone. The voice on the other end tells of a group of surrealists living in the sewers of Paris and making material the André Breton manifesto, which calls on denizens of "underground galleries" to "sneak in a band beneath the cities we want to blow up." The young poet is invited to join this "Clandestine Surrealist Group," the "CSG." He is expected on July 28th, at precisely 8 p.m. ...at Père Lachaise Cemetery. Juan Ródenas, in the afterword, labels Bolaño's writing "itinerant... more interested in the journey than its conclusion." I, for one, am glad that these wanderings continue. – Becky Thomas, Penguin, \$24

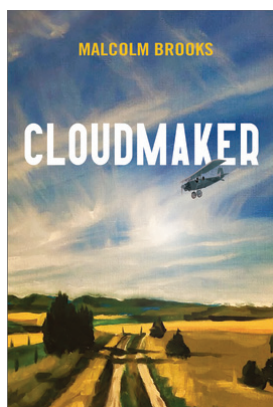


The Liar's Dictionary, Eley Williams

All you lexophiles (lovers of words, word games, puzzles)—this book's for you!! How many of you are familiar with fnuck, bletted, forbs, corymbes, umbels, panicles, psithurism, corbicula, phwoar? Moving chapter by chapter, the novel spins delightfully in twin narratives alternating between lexicographers Peter Winceworth in 1899 and Mallory 100 years later as they diligently work on Swansby's multivolume *Encyclopedic Dictionary*. Bored, ignored by his fellow staffers, and

sensing the need for more personal language and freedom, Winceworth begins inserting unauthorized, fictitious entries—mount-weazels—into the dictionary. Mallory, a young female intern and Swansby's single employee, is to uncover these fakes before the dictionary is digitalized. As the twin narratives interconnect, it is clear that these two lexophiles must discover how to manage their own lives in an often untrustworthy, hoax-strewn and complex world. Each chapter (A to Z) bursts with witty word choices and provides focus; for example, "F is for fabrication (n)." Enter the disgruntled phone caller who daily threatens to send Swansby's staff and offices "to hell," and the story becomes tense and mysterious. This book is an absolute joy to read and a real challenge to review. – Carol Kranes, Doubleday, \$26.95





Cloudmaker, Malcolm Brooks

The year is 1937: both the Great Depression and a drought are making lives miserable in the West. Eighteen-year-old Annalise has been sent from Los Angeles to live with her aunt, uncle and cousin on their Montana ranch to finish out her high school year. She and her cousin Huck, an unexpectedly talented almost-15-year-old, are fascinated with aviation and are following Amelia Earhart's global flight closely but with dread. Just prior to the arrival of Annalise, Huck and his pal

had found a dead body with a Lucky Lindy watch, beginning their great adventure. This is a great read—the best I've had in a long time. Unexpected events, past lives rich with Scottish heritage, Mormon polygamy, and ecclesiastical rapture are layered into the telling in a book I highly recommend to any reader ready to be entertained and educated at the same time on such matters as how to build an airplane out of scrap! – Sue Fleming, Grove Press, \$27

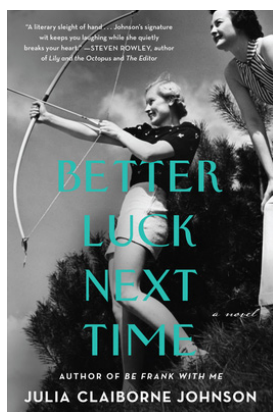
The Paris Library, Janet Skeslien Charles

Odile Souchet, who worked hard to become a part of the American Library in Paris in 1939 and throughout WWII, now lives in Montana. It is 1983. Her two worlds meet when she relates to Lily, a young teenager whose mother has recently died, the story of Paris under Nazi occupation. As a reluctant storyteller, Odile becomes a second mother to Lily, using her own life and her participation in the resistance to teach the adolescent how to live true to her values. Lily learns of the world outside of Montana from Odile, who survived the worst of those war years protecting people and books from harm. The author's note reveals the actual librarians and Parisians whose story this is, bringing the book to life. – Wendy Foster Leigh, Atria, \$28



Better Luck Next Time, Julia Claiborne Johnson

In 1930s Reno you could obtain a quickie divorce by becoming a resident—which took all of six weeks. The Flying Leap caters to those soon-to-be divorcees. The ranch provides luxury, security and eye candy to its guests in this charming, heart-warming, heartbreaker of a tale told through the eyes of shirtless young cowboy Ward. I guarantee you'll turn the last page with a smile on your face. – Paula Longhurst, Custom House, \$28.99



Consent, Annabel Lyon

Two sets of sisters: Saskia and Jenny; Sara and Mattie. Though twins and identical, Saskia is steady and studious where Jenny is impulsive and materialistic. For Sara and Mattie their difference in age is only the beginning. Sara, the older, obsessed with couture clothing and

perfume, becomes an academic. While Mattie, the beauty, intellectually challenged from birth, lives a quiet life at home with their mother. An accident and a death force Saskia and Jenny, still in their twenties, into caregiving roles they struggle not to resent. All four women are as unlike each other as each sister is to the other, and yet one man comes to profoundly affect the lives of all four. Only many years later do Saskia and Sara meet and find answers to the questions of how and why. A profound examination of the boundaries of love, duty, guilt and shame. – Michelle Macfarlane, Knopf, \$25.95

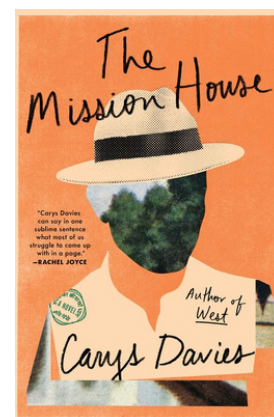


The Kitchen Front, Jennifer Ryan

Fans of "Home Fires" and "The Great British Baking Show" unite! This novel follows four British women whose lives have been upended and worn thin, two years into WWII, as they compete against each other in a cooking contest. The winner will get a coveted job presenting a BBC cooking radio show—but nothing will be the same for any of them by the end. They must reckon not only with each other but also food rations, POWs, and, frankly, their own demons, to prove victorious on the "Kitchen Front." Perfect for lovers of *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*, this novel does not feature letters, but does tempt us with several recipes for their culinary creations. – Michaela Riding, Ballantine, \$28

The Mission House, Carys Davies

Hilary Byrd, an elderly Englishman brought to a standstill by chronic depression, leaves his beloved sister and aunt and journeys to India where, stifled by heat and the crush of people, he finds life even less tolerable than before—until, overhearing a chance conversation, he makes his way to a former British hill town which is cool and sparsely populated. Given the loan of the abandoned mission house, after a rocky start he hires as a driver Jamshed, an old man desperate to make money in order to help his nephew Ravi, a would-be (and improbable) rock star. Those three, along with the Padre, his helpmate Priscilla, whom he is trying to marry off before his own demise and with whom Hilary strikes up a friendship, complete the cast of this quietly funny and deeply touching book. Not much seems to happen as day after day Byrd folds his long legs into the back of Jamshed's ancient car and pours out his past—his work in the library, life with his sister and aunt—while Jamshed listens, occasionally comments, silently wishing for ways to scrape up the wherewithal to help his nephew. But in fact, given the backdrop of Southern India's imperial past and nationalist present the world is happening as they



witness or deal with differences in caste and circumstance, political restlessness, faith and its lack, gender. West's deep affection for her characters, the compassion with which she depicts everything from the illness of depression to the blight of poverty left an indelible mark on this reader's heart. — Betsy Burton, Scribner, \$24



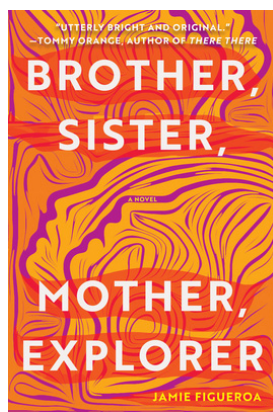
***The Children's Blizzard*,
Melanie Benjamin**

The horrible surprise storm that hit the Dakota Territory on January 12, 1888, became known as the Children's Blizzard—or the Schoolhouse Blizzard—because it hit in the afternoon as the children were just getting out of school. The soddies, as they were known, had no advance warning of their impending doom and were woefully unprepared after a brief warm spell that left them without proper coats or cold weather gear. Benjamin (*The*

Aviator's Wife) brings this disaster brilliantly to life through the stories of two teacher/sisters, Raina and Gerda, barely out of childhood themselves, whose decisions that day affected so many households along with their own futures. It's also the story of the serving girl, Anette, whose fortune is already fraught after her abandonment by her family. Families who had been lured to the plains by the greedy railroad companies with promises of a land of milk and honey had already endured prairie fires, plagues of grasshoppers, spring floods and tornados. Some of the survivors were portrayed as heroines by the newspapers ready for a tale of redemption, thus complicit in the fake news that brought the desperate European immigrants to settle the harsh landscape. Based on true accounts and accurate research, Benjamin tells this tragic tale with compelling drama and great heart. Be sure to have an extra blanket and a cup of something hot nearby while reading this book which will linger with you for days after its end. — Anne Stewart Mark, Random House, \$28

***Brother, Sister, Mother, Explorer*,
Jamie Figueroa**

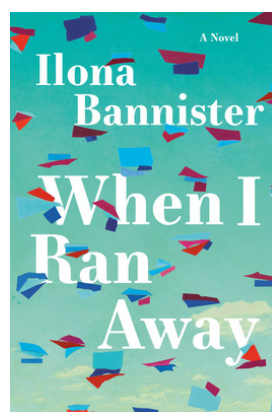
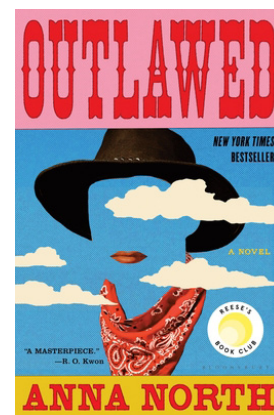
Set in the fictional Ciudad des Tres Hermanas, this story's specific conclusion is linked inextricably to the lived, centuries-old consequences of European and American conquest and exploration alike. Figueroa begins her story of brother Rafa, sister Rufina, mother Rosalinda, and the man only ever called the Explorer, in the aftermath of Rosalinda's death. Supporting characters—Officer Armijo, the Grandmothers to All, and a capricious angel—are themselves supportive in the cause of liberating Rafa and Rufina from their raw stupor. Told from the perspectives of each title character, a complete picture of what has led to this central moment of death and tragic stagnation comes only at the novel's end. Explorer is already long gone and mother is dead. Will brother and sister survive? — Michelle Macfarlane, Catapult, \$25



***Outlawed*, Anna North**

When the 'Great Flu' of the 1830s kills nine of every 10 North Americans, the West, as we know it, swerves into speculation. Oh

there is still riding, rustling and robbing, shooting and sheriffs, but no western states, no Mormon pioneers—The Old West of black and white TV is tweaked and rendered uncanny. Sixty years post pandemic, procreation is a God-given edict and infertile females face banishment, even accusations of witchcraft. When Ada marries at 17, she dreams of a baby on her hip, midwifing like her mother, mastering breech births, morning sickness and childbed fever. But despite her best effort, no baby appears, and Ada flees her home and family. She finds refuge with the fabled Hole in the Wall gang, a group of barren, gender-fluid-women outcasts. While *Outlawed* may seem *The Handmaid's Tale* told round a campfire, amid the purple sage, it evolves into a battle cry for those who are different. Whether a result of inclination or biology, difference, in this book, is never something one chooses and it is never safe. — Becky Thomas, Bloomsbury, \$26

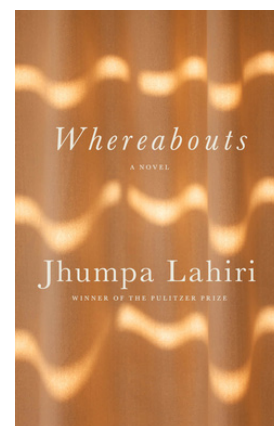


***When I Ran Away*, Ilona Bannister**

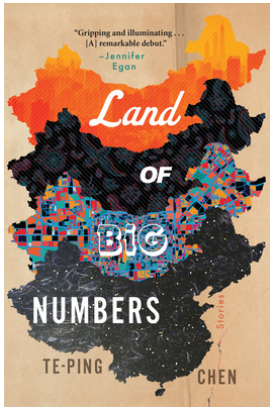
Overwhelmed and desperate months after a difficult delivery, Gigi Stanislawski wakes up in her designer home in London, clocks her husband's shoes by the door and walks out of the house. Holed up in a run-down motel, Gigi revisits memories of her marriage—from meeting her husband on a ferry to Staten Island after the second tower falls, to their current posh London existence—collecting her anger, her fear and her sadness in a final, desperate attempt at healing. Gigi's spot-on Staten Island accent permeates the narrative, seemingly at odds with her "brilliant" London life. A smart debut infused with surprising humor, this achingly real novel examines the reality of motherhood, marriage, postpartum depression, trauma and redemption. — Anne Louise Brings, Knopf, \$27

***Whereabouts*, Jhumpa Lahiri**

Narrated by an unnamed 45-year-old woman, set in an unspecified country (Italy?), told in 48 chapters and 158 pages, this work provides glimpses of seemingly diary-like musings. It shares "faltering memories" which are like "unstubstantiated shadows on a wall." The chapter titles provide a pattern of random places (a stationery store, a trattoria, her mother's). Here Lahiri's character may be trying but unable to place herself somewhere. These titles also reflect encounters that illuminate a life of loneliness and melancholy, laced with memories of a childhood which "harbors few happy moments." The narrator interacts with many different people and is an observer of unknown others she does not really know. But the reader—like the narrator—struggles to find satisfying connections. — Carol Kranes, Knopf, \$23



FICTION



FICTION IN PAPER

Land of Big Numbers: Stories,
Te-Ping Chen

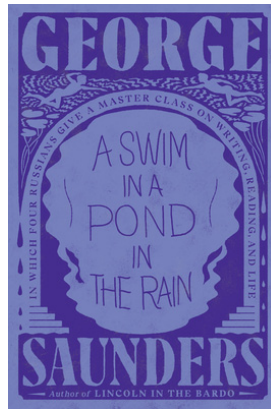
This heart-wrenching collection of stories from journalist Te-Ping Chen examines the difficult, beautiful lives of Chinese citizens from villages and cities across the country. From the story of a call center employee fleeing an abusive relationship to the fable of a mood-altering fruit, Chen flirts between keen social commentary and poignant magical realism. The tapes-

try of stories reveals the vulnerability of a difficult, beautiful country and the people in it striving for love, success, recognition, contentment, and enlightenment. Certainly not for the faint of heart, this collection dares us to empathize deeply and recognize the familiar foibles of humanity in a country far from ours. – Anne Louise Brings, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, \$15.99

NONFICTION

A Swim in a Pond in the Rain,
George Saunders

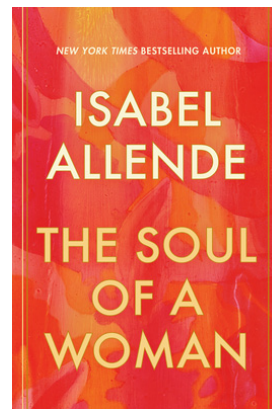
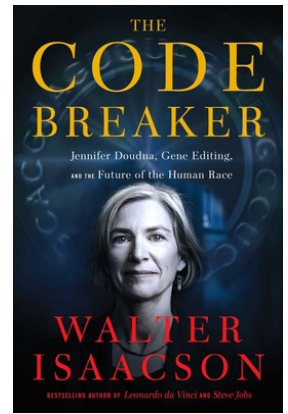
My favorite class in college was a philosophy of literature class I chose on a whim to fill credits my last semester. I sat around a table in a closet-sized conference room with six other students, a literary philosophy anthology, and my favorite professor trying to figure out what literature was and why it had been arranged that way in the first place. The class was intimate, unpretentious, frustrating, liberating, funny, and deeply challenging. *A Swim in a Pond in the Rain* gives that class a run for its money. Booker Prize winner George Saunders dazzles as the most unpretentious, brilliant professor you've ever come across... in a book. Using the works of six classic Russian authors, Saunders guides us through the architecture of fiction, why it works, and why a compelling story can be the most valuable tool in anyone's arsenal. Starting from the translations Saunders has taught for decades at Syracuse University, the reader delves into six short stories one to two pages at a time, stopping for brief "discussion" interludes led by Saunders' simple and penetrating questions: what do we know, what makes us keep reading, what do we expect to happen, what do we want to happen? Saunders not only provides incredibly intuitive instruction story by story but also gently guides the class to larger questions: why are stories important, how do they shape our world, and what makes them so powerful? What begins as an exercise in writing becomes an exercise in reflecting, questioning, and constructing. Saunders makes it very clear that good story-telling is not just a topic for academia, but a matter of paramount importance for humanity. – Anne Louise Brings, Random House, \$28



NONFICTION

The Code Breaker: Jennifer Doudna, Gene Editing, and the Future of the Human Race, Walter Isaacson

Isaacson contends there is one characteristic which the most influential people in history share; that characteristic is curiosity. It was curiosity that led to Jennifer Doudna and her partner Emmanuelle Charpentier receiving the Nobel Prize in 2020. Their work led to the discovery of CRISPR, which, in the world of genetic coding, is a method to alter DNA. This opens the door to genetic modifications which could not only eliminate inherited diseases, but could work to stop plagues before they killed millions. And it is their work on CRISPR which has led directly to the development of vaccines to fight coronavirus. With all great discoveries, questions of a moral nature come to light. Could such gene editing lead to designer babies? Could prospective parents present a wish list of traits they want their child to have? In the world in which we currently live, CRISPR's ability to aid in stopping a pandemic has precedent. Isaacson's book has a cast of fascinating characters, all of whom have played a part in scientific discoveries that alter the way we live and that will impact generations to come. – Barbara Hoagland, Simon & Schuster, \$35



The Soul of a Woman, Isabel Allende

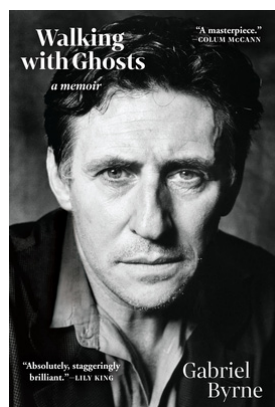
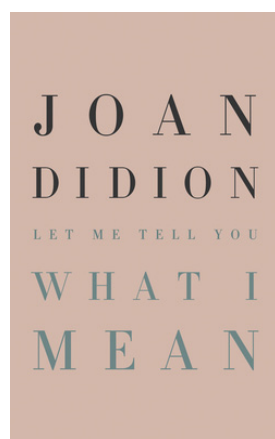
A feminist from the age of 5 (at least according to her family), Allende asked hard questions and disobeyed rules long before the birth of feminism. As an adult she has not only been a vocal and ardent feminist, she has also for years put her money and hard work into the foundation she began after the death of her daughter, Paula, the mission of which is to, "invest in the power of women and girls to secure reproductive rights, economic independence and freedom from violence." If the amazing work they do is inspiring, so is reading of Allende's personal brand of feminism, which doesn't throw motherhood, marriage, or a sense of humor out with the bathwater but rather uses wit and intelligence to move women forward—and to fight directly and vocally when blocked whether by social norms or arcane law. In her signature voice, which is at times unashamedly passionate, at times breezy, occasionally hilarious, Allende entwines the tale of her own life with the possibilities and pitfalls that lie before all women. At 79, she has at last achieved the kind of equilibrium we all yearn for—intellectually engaged, beloved, and best of all, liberated. – Betsy Burton, Ballantine, \$22.99

Let Me Tell You What I Mean, Joan Didion

The first six essays in this new collection date from 1968, the same year Joan Didion published *Slouching Toward Bethlehem*. Hilton Als, in the foreword, points out that in her essays Didion demonstrates "a way of looking but not joining, a way of moving through but not attaching." Readers see what Didion saw in Gamblers Anonymous Meetings and WWII veterans' reunions. We are with her and Nancy Reagan in the garden of the California Governor's Mansion.



The essays which feel most timeless, however, are those where Didion turns her writer's eye back upon herself—what it is like to be rejected from “the collage of one's choice,” or to feel that everyone else in your Berkeley writers' workshop is “not only older and wiser but more experienced.” “Why I Write” further explains Didion's writer's eye: “Three short unambiguous words that share the sound...I, I, I... writing is the act of saying I.” Didion works from “pictures” seen in her mind, “images that shimmer around the edges....You just lie low and let them develop.” For me, there is a developing shimmer around the penultimate essay of the collection, “Last Words,” from 1998. Here Didion critiques the Hemingway estate for publishing, posthumously, unfinished works and “creating the Ernest Hemingway brand.” For Didion, who retyped Hemingway sentences as she developed her own style, these publications were an injustice to the author, and now perhaps, in 2021, provided impetus for taking control of her previously uncollected canon. – Becky Thomas, Knopf, \$23

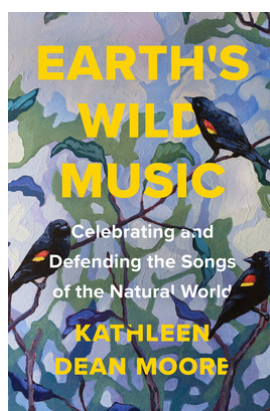


Walking with Ghosts, Gabriel Byrne
“Belonging everywhere and nowhere,” this 70-year-old Irishman candidly recalls what is important to him. The memoir moves between lyrical recollections of a childhood in a now almost vanished Ireland and reflections on Hollywood and Broadway. After four years at a seminary in England (expelled) and odd jobs as messenger boy and factory laborer, Byrne begins his professional career at age 29, starring in more than 80 film, television, and stage productions—and receiving

countless awards. He appears with Richard Burton in “Wagner” (1983), a miniseries which also features Laurence Olivier, Ralph Richardson and John Gielgud. As lead in the television series “In Treatment” (2008-10), he wins a Golden Globe for Best Actor. On Broadway, appearing in “A Long Day's Journey into Night” (2016), Byrne is nominated for a Tony Award for Best Actor. The memoir offers delightful glimpses into this dramatic career but also pays homage to Dublin (“This place birthed my love of simple things”), his mother and father (“like a photograph in my heart”) and courageously recounts his battles with alcoholism, abuse by his seminary priest, and ambivalence with fame. “Sometimes I am ashamed to be an actor...I've done the most appalling shit for money.” In a final moment—with his mother's ghost sitting in the corner of his Broadway dressing room—Byrne enters the stage and “moves toward the light.” A remarkable Irish memoir! – Carol Kranes, Grove, \$26

Earth's Wild Music, Kathleen Dean Moore

“In the end, all of creation is only sound and silence moving through space and time, like music.” Moore's lifelong love of music permeates this paean to the majestic wonder of the natural world. Her concern is that the world is losing much of its sound, from the loss of bird habitat to the dwindling population of whales and their unique

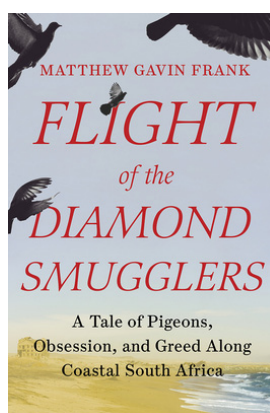
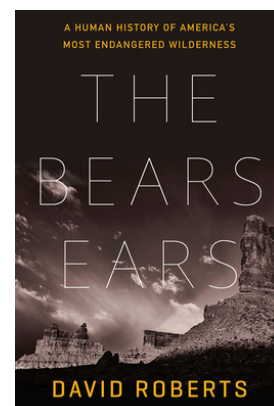


sounds in the waters off the Alaskan coast. She and her husband Frank divide their time between Oregon and a small island off the coast of Alaska, and it is in these surroundings, with which she is intimately familiar, that she recognizes the diminishment of nature's sound. Moore believes that in order to save this world we must be able to truly hear and see it. Her wide and long view of the world is anchored in the minutiae right at her feet. Lyrical is an overused description, but in this case that is the first word that comes

to mind. – Jan Sloan Tempest, Counterpoint Press, \$26

The Bears Ears: a Human History of America's Most Endangered Wilderness, David Roberts

For over 25 years Roberts has explored the area that he claims as his “favorite place on earth.” In his latest book, he weaves his intimate knowledge of this spectacular landscape with its human history from the early ancestors of the Navajo who originated in the sub-Arctic to the Spanish explorers and their interactions with the earliest white settlers in this area and then to the recent past. Roberts' description of the country surrounding Bears Ears and the structures left behind by the Old Ones make the reader want to lace up those hiking boots and strap on a back pack. Yes, we do need one more book about Bears Ears. This is the one. – Jan Sloan Tempest, Norton, \$27.95



Flight of the Diamond Smugglers, Matthew Gavin Frank

In 2016 American investigative journalist Matthew Gavin Frank set out along South Africa's notorious Diamond Coast to report on the illicit diamond trade. He stumbled upon a remarkable fact—diamonds are being smuggled out of the mines via carrier pigeons trained by mine workers in hopes of selling the gems for a small profit to ease their poverty and suffering. The mines date back to the early colonization by the Dutch and, more

recently, the De Beers Corporation. This true crime tale is carefully laid out to highlight the terrible conditions for workers and the irreversible destruction to the land in southern Namibia and South Africa. Frank and his partner, recovering from personal loss, meet with workers, security, environmental managers and the mysterious Mr. Lester who has a mystical and dangerous reputation for keeping order and maintaining greed and exploitation for management at the cost of lives and land. – Sue Fleming, Liveright, \$25.95



The Barbizon: The Hotel that Set Women Free, Paulina Bren

It could be wagered that every woman, at some point, has contemplated an escape from her prescribed life. If her reverie involved New York City, the Barbizon Hotel for Women might well have been a part of the plan. It was, after all, where Grace Kelly, Sylvia Plath, Joan Didion and scores of others landed on their arrival in the Big Apple. Built in 1928 on the corner of 63rd and Lexington, a woman could stay in one of 720 rooms for \$12 a week, daily maid service included. When Plath showed up in 1953 her bill was \$15 a week, and her experiences in the hotel (rechristened as “The Amazon”) became the impetus for *The Bell Jar*. Bren details the hotel’s life from inception to condominium conversion, but she makes it clear that the Barbizon is a metonym for the women—intrepid, creative, and single—who stayed there while seeking an expanded role in their male-dominated world. The history of the hotel is a history of their struggle. Twelve dollars a week in 1928 would be \$175 today. Consider me nostalgic, but a month in New York for \$700, with all the Barbizon amenities, sounds quite wonderful to me. – Becky Thomas, Simon & Schuster, \$27



Churchill & Son, Josh Ireland

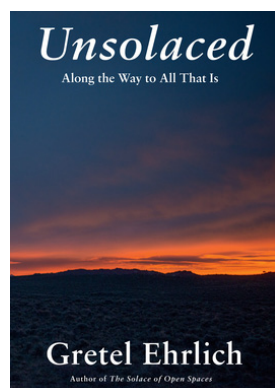
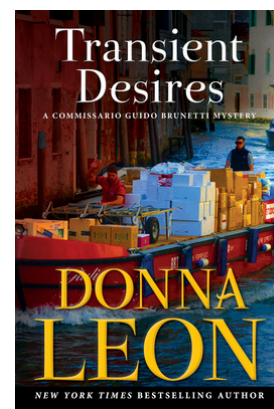
The relationship between fathers and sons is often complicated and none more so than that between Winston and Randolph Churchill. Winston’s father was not only absent emotionally, he was a vicious critic of his son’s life and ambitions. This coldness inspired Winston to turn in a totally different direction in his parenting of Randolph, often to Randolph’s detriment. Ireland’s book is a testament to the love they shared and to the difficulties this love created. Their relationship was often volatile

and corrosive particularly as it pertained to Randolph’s outsized expectations of his role not only in his father’s life, but in that of Great Britain. The role of son to one of the most admired men of the 20th century proved to be Randolph’s undoing. The story of this father and son is mesmerizing. – Barbara Hoagland, Dutton, \$34

MYSTERY/THRILLER

Transient Desires, Donna Leon

Always crisply and intelligently told, well plotted and vivid in terms of character and of the Venetian landscape on which they are set, Leon’s mysteries are balm to the soul. This, her 30th (and yes, you can set aside a few weeks and binge if you’re in need) involves two young American women injured while out joyriding and then abandoned on a pier near a hospital by the young Italian men they’d been partying with. But why, having gone that far were they not taken inside? The reason, as it emerges, takes the investigation, led by Commissarios Brunetti and Claudio Griffoni, into darkest corners of the Laguna and requires the (often fraught) cooperation of the Carabinieri and the Coast Guard. Leon levels her beady eye on society and corruption with deadly accuracy and an assured irony that ring all-too-true in another superb mystery. Brava! – Betsy Burton, Grove, \$27



Unsolaced: Along the Way to All That Is, Gretel Ehrlich

Ehrlich published her first collection of essays, *The Solace of Open Spaces*, in 1986. Several award-winning collections followed. Now, 35 years later, *Unsolaced* bookends her career as she returns to and retells several already collected pieces, viewing them through different eyes—eyes opened to the reality of loss. “It’s getting smaller,” she writes. “All the places we can go to find solace.” Ehrlich’s prose

remains engaging and stirring as she paints pictures that encompass the sensations and denizens of her favorite places—Iceland, Zimbabwe, California, Wyoming. Though climate change underlies the unease and grief apparent in her essays, she avoids, for the most part, discussions of cause, blame or remedy. Nature writers today all stare into the chasm of climate devastation, and most focus their lens on what we could have done/could do. Ehrlich’s book, rather, is elegiac. She has written an eulogy for her greatest love. – Becky Thomas, Pantheon, \$26.95

A Most Remarkable Creature: The Hidden Life and Epic Journey of the World’s Smartest Birds of Prey, Jonathan Meiburg

This book, a fascinating look at the Caracara bird found mostly on the Falkland Islands and the coasts of Tierra del Fuego, is mainly for the ardent ornithologist in your life. A remarkably compelling combination of travel adventure, biography and science, this is a true reminder of just how much of our world is still waiting to be discovered. – Jan Sloan Tempest, Knopf, \$30



Slough House, Mick Herron

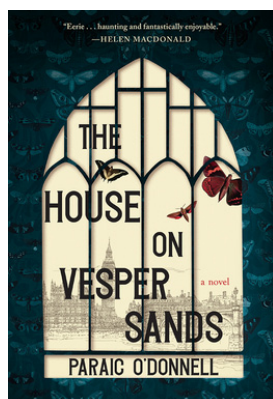
Post-Brexit, Diana Taverner, the head of MI5, has made a deal with the devil to quietly avenge the deaths of civilians on home soil—and it hasn’t gone unnoticed. Least of all by Jackson Lamb, the spy gone to seed whose team of misfits is suddenly more accident prone than usual. Or by the up-and-coming media mogul who wants to make the news rather than report it. Or by the devil himself, who has compromised Lady Di in ways she can’t even yet imagine. And there are con-

sequences for Diana’s action—such as the pair of Russian assassins dispatched to take out the fabled hit squad who killed their colleague. Not to mention a slow horse returned from the underworld.

– Paula Longhurst, Soho Crime, \$27.95

The House on Vesper Sands, Paraic O'Donnell

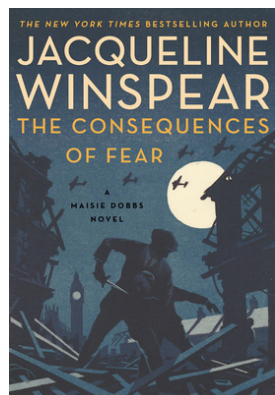
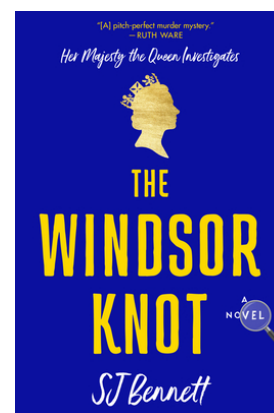
A perfect recipe for a Victorian mystery: start with a no-nonsense Scotland Yard Inspector, add a Cambridge-educated dropout/sidekick, an ambitious female journalist, a dedicated Reverend, a bunch of missing young “working” girls, a sprinkling of British nobility and a good dose of suicides and murders, all heavily seasoned with dark arts and potions. Readers will immediately be captured by a fast-paced opening incident. Why does the seamstress jump from the window? Why has she stitched a cryptic message onto her skin? Readers will also delight at the witty exchanges between the Inspector and his “Sergeant.” “You are like a fellow on the verge of a poem,” Cotter tells Bliss. Readers will also respect reporter Octavia’s (“Wavy”) efforts to make this case one that matters beyond her society column assignment. Unraveling the clues, connecting the dots, knowing whom to trust, this drama culminates in chilling, ghostly final scenes at the house on Vesper Sands. As an avid mystery devourer, I loved it! – Carol Kranes, Tin House, \$26.95



As Detective Gurney pursues the answer, he will be asked to help solve the throat-slashed murder of the wealthiest and most powerful citizen of Larchfield, Angus Russell, whose case’s evidence also points to Tate *after* his death. Others with possible motives include Angus’ wife Lorinda (with her “glacial indifference” to her husband’s murder) and the town’s mayor Chandler Aspern (Angus’ bitter enemy). The discovery of more bodies and Tate’s empty coffin—lid splintered from the inside—unleash a magnet of sensation seekers, self-proclaimed zombie hunters, media maniacs, and apocalyptic preachers. Rallying cries of “Satan is loose on the land” and “with guns and cross... we’ll beat the demons down” spiral through the town. Yet, the reader is kept well-grounded by Gurney through his expert thoughtful, probing, meticulous detective work: “Believe nothing. Trust no one. Question everything.” This excellent, well-written mystery will satisfy any reader (and you won’t come close to guessing the final outcome!) – Carol Kranes, Counterpoint, \$28

The Windsor Knot, S.J. Bennett

When Rozie Oshodi, a bright young British Nigerian officer formerly of the Royal Horse Artillery, begins her new job at Windsor Palace, little does she realize that the Queen will turn to her for more than the occasional fetch-and-carry duties. Her Royal Highness, a subtle, intelligent character confined by history and custom to the daily duties of the palace, is definitely the protagonist in the novel, and when a young Russian pianist is murdered during a “dine and sleep” held prior to her 90th birthday, the Queen not only takes a personal interest in his life and death but also recognizes the usefulness of Rozie, using her as her link to the outside world. Her Royal Highness is a quiet thinker who leaves the applause to the professionals—even when they underestimate her. As a woman of a certain age myself, I appreciate the portrayal of this 90-year-old woman who is shrewd, wise, caring. This is not a mystery that patronizes age but recognizes the importance of experience and knowledge. – Wendy Foster Leigh, \$27.99



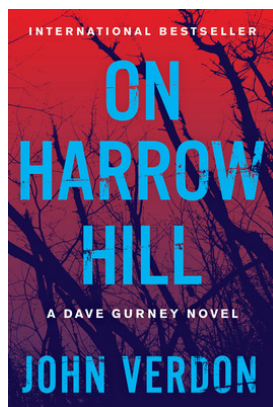
The Consequences of Fear, Jacqueline Winspear

It is 1941, a time of transition as Americans prepare to enter the war. On a dark night filled with the flare of bombs, a young message runner, Freddie Hackett, witnesses a murder. When no one believes him, he turns to Maisie Dobbs, who owns her own private investigation agency which she runs with her old friends while she serves her country with the Special Operations Executive (SOE) assessing candidates for the French resistance.

Maisie recognizes the truth in his story and also the dangers that exist for him and for her. Free French agents are ensconced in London at this time and she is dragged into the world of grudges going back to WWI. Compassion and intelligence combine in her fears for Freddie and for her family and friends. More than a detective story, this, like all of the Maisie Dobbs books, is a combination of adventure, romance and intelligent historical fiction. – Wendy Foster Leigh, Harper, \$27.99

On Harrow Hill, John Verdon

“I am the dark angel who rose from the dead.” These eerie, chilling words are brushed in blood on the walls of two brutally murdered women’s homes and the barn door of our detective, Dave Gurney. Fingerprints and DNA—*incontrovertible evidence*—found at the scenes point to bad boy Billy Tate EXCEPT that Billy was hit by lightning, tumbled from a church roof, and was pronounced dead before these murders occurred! *What evidence then is reliable and to be trusted?*



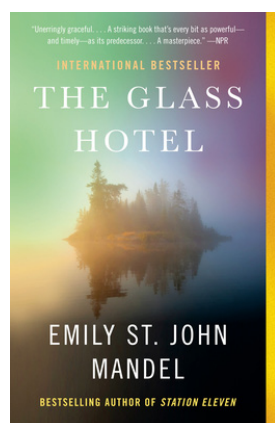
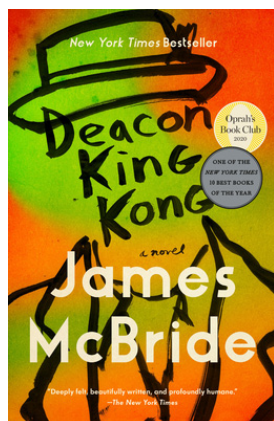
Good Neighbors, Sarah Langan

Who was 13-year-old Shelly Schroeder running from when she fell into the hungry sink hole? Was it her next door neighbor—ex-rocker-tattooed Arlo Wilde whom the neighbors accuse of raping her? Or Rat Pack neighborhood boys Charlie Walsh and Dave Harrison, who say Shelly’s “messed up”? Or her once-best friend Julia Wilde who rams head-first into her skinny body? Or her own mother, Rhea? If Shelly’s perfectly preserved body is recovered from the “gaping excavated wound” that is the Sterling Park sinkhole, the truth will be revealed. But the violence and hidden darkness of a small community in the aftermath of a tragedy is also a horrendous wound. The reader hangs in suspense until the final pages. Riveting! – Carol Kranes, Atria, \$27

FICTION

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, \$17

**The Glass Hotel**, Emily St. John Mandel

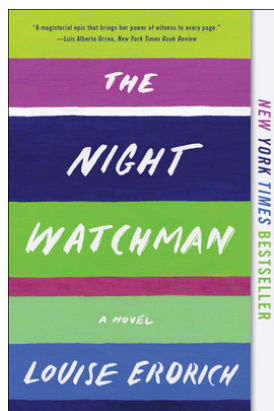
Take a Bernie Madoff-like Ponzi scheme, a chic and difficult-to-get-to hotel on Vancouver Island, a touch of fantasy and a very diverse cast of characters and you've got what Mandel creates so well...a narrative that grips you on page one and keeps you on tenterhooks until the last page. I know we often 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

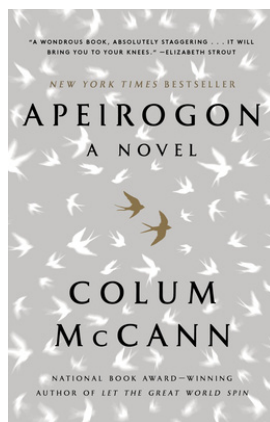
through my imagination ever since I finished it (the second time)! – Anne Holman, Vintage, \$16.95

The Night Watchman, Louise Erdrich (Available March 23)

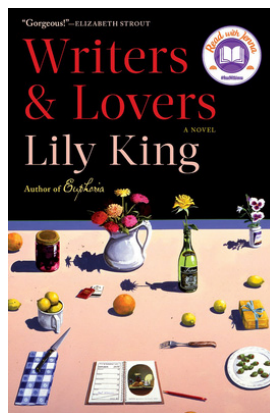
There is so much to love in Erdrich's new book: a plot about white plotters trying to steal Chippewa land; tall tales from The Book of Mormon, the Bible, and collective Chippewa memory; a young woman lost in the city whose sister and mother fear for her, dream her danger; her sister, Patrice, whose hated 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 Deputy Commissioner for the



Bureau of 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. – Betsy Burton, Harper Perennial, \$18

**Apeirogon**, Colum McCann

Apeirogon, a "countably infinite" shape, describes McCann's new book perfectly in that it evokes the countably infinite stories that we as humans tell ourselves and each other in our desire to make sense of an often senseless world. Set in Israel and Palestine, it is the story of Bassam Aramin, a Palestinian, and Rami Elhmenanan, an Israeli, who have both lost daughters to the violent conflict between their nations. These two characters and their stories are real, the rest is fiction. *Apeirogon* covers the larger themes of life: friendship, love, loss and belonging, and does so beautifully. However, the beating heart of the book—something that could cure all conflicts—comes in the exact center of the novel and is told by Rami.... "if they [the Palestinians] were anything other than objects to be feared, they would become real people." The story itself is told in the manner of the *One Thousand and One Arabian Nights*, each vignette advancing not only the tales of Rami and Bassam but also the physical and emotional checkpoints that they must negotiate, small passages that stitch together story, history, nature and politics. A soaring, searing novel that is at once bleak and hopeful, this is absolutely one of the best books that I have ever had the pleasure of reading. – Jan Sloan Tempest, Random House, \$18

**Writers & Lovers**, Lily King

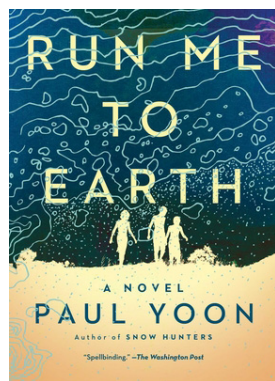
Most of Casey's friends have let go of their literary aspirations, settling for more practical careers or for marriage. But she writes and rewrites the novel she's determined to finish, taking her characters up and down the stairs of their lives even as her own mental balance starts to teeter. King regards 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, \$17

Redhead by the Side of the Road, Anne Tyler (Available March 30)

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 his 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, Vintage, \$16



Run Me to Earth,
Paul Yoon

Set in Laos in the 1960s, this spare but powerful narrative tells the tale of three orphans and a dedicated doctor named Yang. The orphans have taken refuge in a bombed-out field hospital and become motorcycle couriers maneuvering across fields laced with unexploded bombs and under barrages of bombs from

the air—until Yang arranges for the four of them to be evacuated on the last helicopter leaving the country. Thus begins a story that lasts decades, a poignant, tragic and beautiful work of historical fiction that once again solidifies Paul Yoon as a writer of remarkable talent. It will stay with you long after you finish the last page.

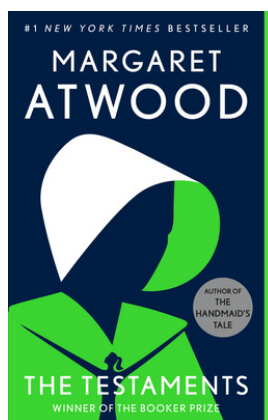
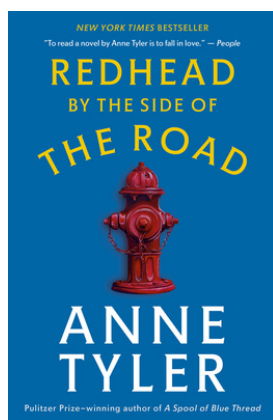
– Sally Larkin, Simon & Schuster, \$17

Weather, Jenny Offill

Lizzie, a librarian, lives a piecemeal but fulfilling life, working part-time at the library and part-time fielding post-apocalyptic emails for a friend with a famous doomsday podcast. Lizzie has a husband and son she loves, a brother she's trying to rescue. On the whole she seems happy—as we see in the fragments of narrative and interior monologue interspersed with the above-mentioned emails, snippets from philosophy and religion, jokes....all of which sounds beyond piecemeal but is actually amusing, moving (especially the scenes with her son), and great fun to read—until the emails darken along with her brother's psychosis and the country's politics. We realize that the weather has been steadily darkening, that the world suddenly seems more terrifying than amusing—that it has become, as Yeats would have it, a world in which, “the center will not hold.” The world we now live in. Startling us, dazzling us, devastating us, Offill can do more in fewer pages than anyone I've read in years. – Betsy Burton, Vintage, \$16

The Testaments, Margaret Atwood

The Handmaid's Tale sent readers into shock—could such a thing happen here? readers asked themselves as women's rights were eroded and then taken away completely in the renamed land of Gilead, leaving them with no function but procreation. Frightening to read in the '80s when the book came out. Now, nearly 35 years later, we find ourselves in a time of massive, frightening change and it seems as if we are headed into some Gilead-like wilderness and can't see a path forward. **The Testaments**, the sequel to **The Handmaid's**



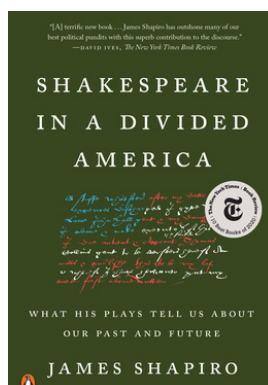
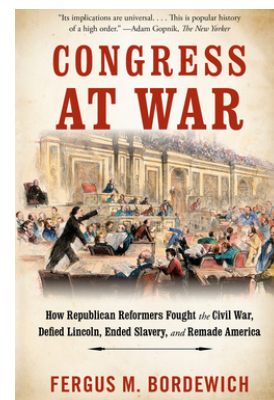
Tale, provides a beacon in a dark time. Three women, one, the daughter of an escapee who's been living in Canada; one the daughter of one of Gilead's commanders; the third the leader of the “aunts,” the group of women who hold power in Gilead insuring the subjugation of their sisters, have all left records of a time when Gilead's iron grip on its citizens may be beginning to fail. A blistering read, one that swings the reader from hope to fear and back again, **The Testaments** is impossible to put down and once finished is fodder for thought and for much discussion. – Betsy Burton, Anchor, \$16.95

– Betsy Burton, Anchor, \$16.95

NONFICTION

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 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 troubled times! – Patrick Fleming, Anchor, \$17.99

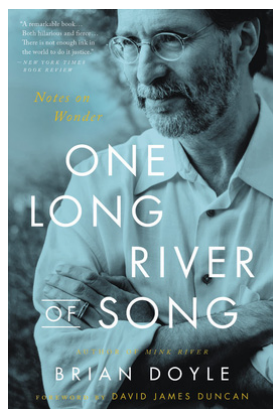


Shakespeare in a Divided America,
James Shapiro

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, \$18

One Long River of Song: Notes on Wonder, Brian Doyle

Tender, funny, real, smart are all words that describe this diverse assortment of writings and musings by the late Brian Doyle. In everything from a letter to his brother Kevin and a narrative about meeting the Dali Lama in which the two bond over sports, to the fraught topic of dealing with cancer, these short gems will make you gasp, chortle, shed a tear, and will challenge readers to make the most of every day. I loved it! – Margaret Brennan Neville, Back Bay, \$17.99



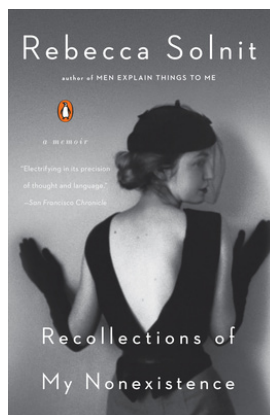
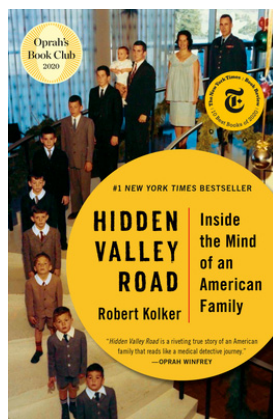
The Body: A Guide for Occupants, Bill Bryson

In his latest, Bill Bryson, a true Renaissance man, has given us a tour-de-force tour of the human body in a detailed and revelatory look into this most complicated organism. Microbes, the workings of the heart and lungs, the skeleton, the intestines, the immune system are all examined and analyzed. Little-known anecdotes about the body are explained as only Bryson can do—with wit and intelligence. In terms that the layman can understand and appreciate, the man who

walked the Appalachian Trail and explained the history of the house has now given us, through nearly five years of research, the very best layman's explanation of the workings of the human body. – Barbara Hoagland, Anchor, \$17

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 10 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, Anchor, \$17



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, Penguin, \$15.99

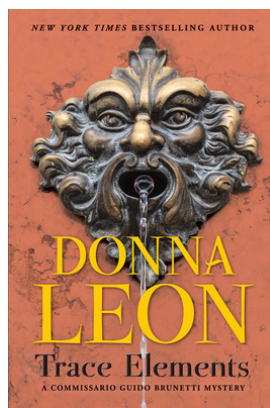
MYSTERY/THRILLER

Long Bright River, Liz Moore

The Fitzpatrick sisters weren't always at odds with each other. Kacey works the streets and so does her sister, Mickey. But Mick is a cop with a 4-year-old son and Kacey is hostage to her opioid addiction. When a bizarre series of murders rocks Mickey's Philadelphia beat, Kacey vanishes. Mick risks her job and her life to locate her sister. Soon she's questioning whom she can really trust. – Paula Longhurst, Riverhead, \$17



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, \$17



THE INKSLINGER

Publisher and Editor: Betsy Burton

Designer:

Hilary Dudley

Copy Editors:

Anne Brillinger

Photographer:

Deon Hilger

Michelle Macfarlane

Michelle Macfarlane

Inkslingers:

Betsy Burton

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One of a Kind

We became unabashed fans of Tony Caputo many years ago, addicted to his ready smile and the amazing sandwiches he served at Granatos. When he decided to start his own delicatessen and market downtown we admired his foresight in choosing a location on the cusp of change. He quickly became the anchor of what is now a thriving neighborhood and even knowing his eager energy, his creativity and his knowledge of food, we were amazed by the instant success of Caputo's. We shouldn't have been. All the ingredients for success were there: That beaming smile and genuine warmth which were the font of his customer service wizardry; his outsized passion for and knowledge of Italian food; his ability to brilliantly curate his inventory of foods and cheeses (not to mention the best sandwiches in town—the meatballs, oh, my!). Caputo's became and remains a marvel. Faithful customer and friend of the bookstore long before he expanded into our neighborhood, a colleague in the local business community where he was always ready to lend a hand, Tony was dear to all of us. Ever friendly and funny and kind, he *was* one of a kind. We can't believe he's gone, and we will miss him sorely.



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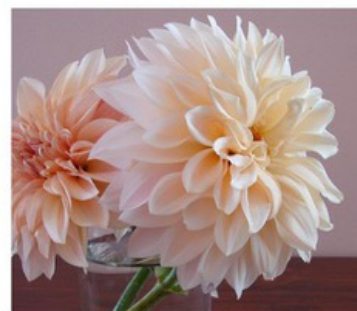


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