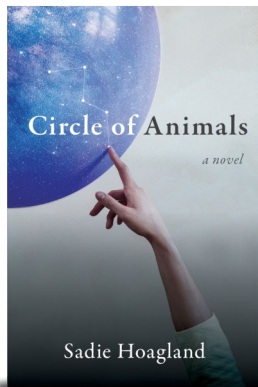


## GENERAL



## Circle of Animals

Sadie Hoagland, Red Hen Press (AUG 20)  
Softcover \$19.95 (312pp)  
978-1-63628-158-2

In Sadie Hoagland's novel *Circle of Animals*, a woman goes through cycles of trauma, motherhood, complicated love, and perseverance in a misogynistic culture.

Sky's life is unusual thanks to her free-spirited, unpredictable mother, Edi. However, when Edi goes missing during the same week Sky is assaulted by a coworker, Sky worries that something more insidious is at play than one of Edi's usual jaunts. The more Sky uncovers about her mother's past, the more she realizes the true scope of what women go through every day.

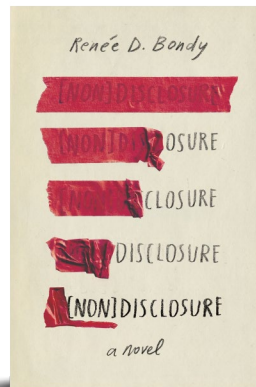
Sky's and Edi's characterizations, both as individuals and in relationship to one another, are gut-wrenching in their realism. Sky's childhood memories of Edi are imperfect, tender, bitter, and sweet—roiling with so much unresolved hurt that it's impossible to look away. The different traumas and subsequent fallouts are described in aching but necessary detail; they follow the women in ways they don't expect.

Even with the heaviness at play, there are moments of joy and hope that permeate the narrative. The women in Sky's life, including her best friend Liz and Edi's longtime friend Deb, uplift her. And while Edi is an unruly mother, there is an undeniable charm and humor baked into her personality. There's a spark in Sky, too: she refuses to give up or give in, and she is stubborn about finding Edi at all costs. Moreover, there is intense love in the mother-daughter relationship, despite its complexities and baggage.

A daughter's love directs her search for her missing mother in *Circle of Animals*, a bracing novel about womanhood and survival as an act of defiance.

NATALIE WOLLENZIEN

## GENERAL



## [non]disclosure

Renée D. Bondy, Second Story Press  
(OCT 17) Softcover \$22.95 (184pp)  
978-1-77260-392-7

In Renée D. Bondy's historical novel about clerical sexual abuse, *[non]disclosure*, a survivor finds the courage to tell her story.

As a girl at a Catholic school, the unnamed narrator is taught that the reward for confession is no less than Jesus. When she tells her parents about their priest's sexually abusive behavior toward her, they tell the bishop; he has the priest transferred for his "miscommunication." Later, while caring for her friend, Neil, and many others who are sick with AIDS, she keeps quiet about her abuse. But then a news report about the priest unearths her memories. With help, she confronts him in her own words—in court.

The narrator's quiet wariness sets the book's tone and runs counter to the order emphasized in school scenes, which are dominated by a disciplinarian nun. The narrator's home life is also overshadowed by her happy-go-lucky sister. Later, a feisty nurse and her punk-rock partner make space for the narrator to cultivate the courage to express herself, showing how circumstances can either hinder or help survivors to come forward.

Indeed, the book is atmospheric when it comes to conveying the ambiance of the narrator's church, school, and home environments. Her maintained anonymity and later, protective atmospheres make it easier for her to share her truths while still concealing more private details. Still, some information slips through, as about the taste she associates with worship, her close attention to photographs, and her first dinner out with Neil. She is a compelling lead. Beyond her are descriptions of the culture of secrets that made her vulnerable; such reflections begin many of the book's chapters.

Dedicated to survivors at large, the novel *[non]disclosure* follows a survivor as she advocates for fellow abuse survivors in an intimate way.

MARI CARLSON

## HISTORICAL



## Lady Flyer

Heather B. Moore, Shadow Mountain Publishing (SEP 3) Hardcover \$27.99 (416pp). 978-1-63993-295-5

In Heather B. Moore's exciting historical novel *Lady Flyer*, a trailblazing World War II pilot and fierce advocate for women's equality takes a stand that changes women's futures in the military.

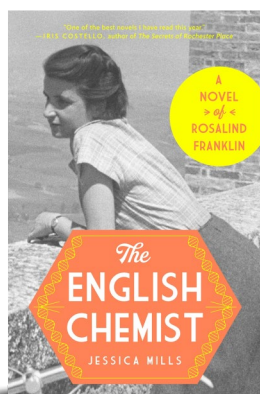
Set mainly in the United States during World War II, the story incorporates history, a love story, and the record of women's struggles to break down barriers to full equality. At sixteen, Nancy Harkness's determination to become a professional pilot is sparked by a thrilling barnstorming ride: "She felt separated from her body for a moment. Despite the roar of the engine, it was peaceful in the sky. A quiet stillness." Later, she impresses her instructors with her ability. But obstacles loom: her mother objects to her dreams, and she faces gender bias, institutional opposition to women pilots, sabotage, and a colleague's rivalry.

The steady narrative alternates between the grim realities of the war and warm vignettes that cover Nancy's blossoming romance, married life, and strong friendships with other women pilots. Her conversations with friends and colleagues are natural and unaffected; with her husband, she engages in playful banter too. There's suggestive yet discreet imagery ("He chuckled, a warm sound that seemed to brush against her skin") that reflects the couple's thriving marriage. And Nancy's emotions are palpable throughout: she expresses frustration and stress over military gender bias and grief and anger over the deaths of other women pilots. Indeed, the horrors of war feature large, as does the gender-based discrimination that denied women like Nancy respect, fair pay, and the right to military honors at burial.

In the engaging historical novel *Lady Flyer*, a pioneering pilot helps to end the war and build a more equitable future for women.

KRISTINE MORRIS

## HISTORICAL



## The English Chemist

Jessica Mills, Pegasus Books (SEP 3)  
Hardcover \$27.95 (288pp)  
978-1-63936-708-5

In Jessica Mills's absorbing biographical novel *The English Chemist*, the scientist responsible for discovering the illusive structure of DNA is denied recognition due to the duplicity of her colleagues.

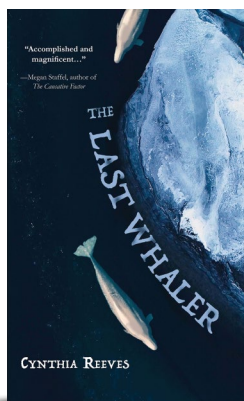
Rosalind Franklin, a scientist with a sharp wit and a conflicted inner world, narrates. In an intimate way, she covers her life and studies, culminating in her pivotal contribution to DNA research. Along the way, she experiences exclusion, belittling, and embarrassment as a woman working in what many considered to be a man's world. Of her colleagues, she says, "Competition and in-fighting had eroded what was left of their souls, and they slowly calcified as they became more embittered despite their mounting accolades. It was not a fate that I wanted."

The worldbuilding is grim, featuring descriptions of dank laboratories, less than optimal equipment, and intense work often done to the tune of fierce competition. Rosalind's responses to the rigors of scientific research and the toll taken by antiquated attitudes around women in science dominate the book's progression; often, it focuses on her stand for professional ethics and personal integrity. She is a sensitive narrator here and elsewhere—for example, lamenting that music gives her vertigo, and noting that she would rather bury her feelings than share them. Fury is generated when her pioneering work is stolen by, and credited to, her colleagues. Later, in a conflicted moment, she questions whether her life might have been different had she been more outspoken.

*The English Chemist* is an immersive biographical novel about the woman whose discovery of the helical structure of DNA opened the door to understanding the nature of life.

KRISTINE MORRIS

## HISTORICAL



## The Last Whaler

Cynthia Reeves, Regal House  
Publishing (SEP 3) Softcover \$20.95  
(332pp), 978-1-64603-508-3

A whaler and his wife experience a tragedy and new beginnings in Cynthia Reeves's poignant historical novel *The Last Whaler*.

Tor loves whaling. Each summer, he leaves his family in Norway and sails to icy Svalbard to hunt. But Tor's wife, Astrid, is haunted by the loss of their son, Birk, and feels desperate on the farm without him. Though he's reluctant, Tor allows Astrid to accompany him to the whaling station. There, he and Astrid begin again, rekindling their romance and finding beauty in the unforgiving land where life is fragile. The Arctic weather, looming war, and Astrid's mental health lead to uncertainties, while an unexpected pregnancy and a missed window for escape propel the couple toward tragedy again.

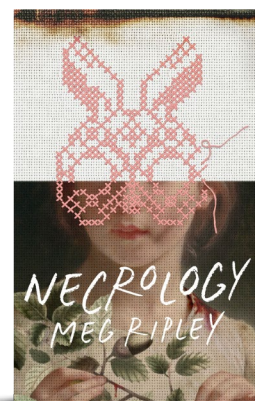
The book begins a decade after Astrid's summer at the whaling station, when Tor returns to make peace with her death. Its timelines and narratives braid together—in effect, mirroring the tumult of the couple's last year. Astrid's letters to Birk chronicle her descent into despair, while Tor's retelling years later supplements her narrative, detailing his grief and guilt over his family's deaths. Both narratives are raw and heartrending, with the couple unabashed about discussing topics like mental and maternal health and the impact of the loss on their intimacy.

The descriptions of the harsh Arctic landscape are lucid, at times ethereal. Nature plays a prominent role in Tor and Astrid's relationship: the "soft clink" of "silvery bubbles" whispers to Tor as he grieves; Astrid searches for an undiscovered plant species to name in Birk's honor. And if without mitigating the deep, irreversible losses experienced by all involved, the story's somber conclusion brims with hope.

*The Last Whaler* is a vibrant historical novel in which grief and triumph are set against the severe Arctic wilderness.

VIVIAN TURNBULL

## HORROR



## Necrology The Dirty #1

Meg Ripley, Creature Publishing (SEP 24)  
Softcover \$20 (386pp), 978-1-951971-14-4

In Meg Ripley's subversive, thrilling novel *Necrology*, a wise girl raised on the wonders of the wilds is forced to contend with those who would see her kind extinguished.

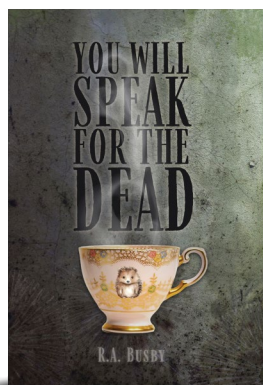
In an alternate version of America, magic pulses through the population, wielded either by Dirty women who are forbidden from practicing it or by Freeman, who sit in seats of power and loathe what the Dirty represent. An old truce between the group frays when a Freeman leader, coveting a woman he cannot have, is violent and receives violence in return. Eight-year-old Rabbit is at the center of the turmoil that ensues: the adopted daughter of Whitetail, who swallowed her vicious sister to delay war, she is encouraged to denounce Whitetail and the Dirty in public, ensuring the elder's execution.

Taken from her forest home to an industrialized city, Rabbit proves a challenge to her captors. Though she witnessed Whitetail commit an unforgivable act, she maintains her belief in the goodness of the Dirty magic that formed her. Men may want to reshape the world in their image, but she resists being their tool, knowing that "if you don't believe there is good in magic, power in women's own decisions, then you will never see the future that should be."

*Necrology* is a life-giving novel that employs its own intoxicating vocabulary, embracing the dual meanings of words like "dirty," which men use as an aspersion and which women claim with pride. Its mythology includes the necrology, a stone that contains the history of Dirty women; summonings of twin incarnations and the specters of the dead; and behind it all, the wild, which endows those who honor it with magic. The first book in a series, its gripping ending fires the first supernatural shot in a war to come—one that will determine whether women will be free.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER

## HORROR



## You Will Speak for the Dead

R. A. Busby, Stelliform Press (OCT 10)  
Softcover \$15.99 (86pp)  
978-1-73831-659-5

In R. A. Busby's novella *You Will Speak for the Dead*, a house cleaner faces an unexpected personal crisis while wrestling with his most bizarre job yet.

Putrid kitchens, bug infestations, and massive piles of junk are all in a day's work for Paul and his fellow hoarder house cleaners. But their 982 Avirosa Avenue job is different from the start: the client refuses to say much about the house or its owner, a strange white substance fills the air within, and a large quantity of mushrooms are growing inside.

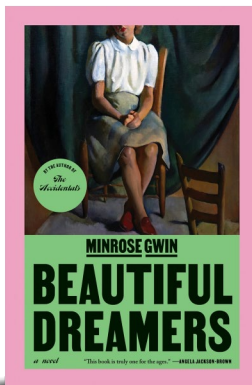
Not long after starting the work, a change comes over Paul. He begins having visions and memories that aren't his; his health begins to deteriorate. He develops a bond with the house's owner via her abundant keepsakes, which possess a living aura that allows Paul to interact with her without the two ever having met. As his feelings of connection to the house grow, it's up to Paul to discover the secret hiding within the mountains of debris that once represented someone's life.

The novel is most concerned with interconnectivity and the staying power of memories; its horror elements are minimal, beyond scattered instances of body horror. When Paul chooses to ignore each of his physical alterations soon after they appear, the potential for significant fright or revulsion diminishes. Instead, Paul's account of his life-changing experiences are centered, showing how working in the house alters his view of the world. He even breaks the fourth wall to try to relate to the audience at times—a habit that can be distracting.

In the revealing novella *You Will Speak for the Dead*, a house cleaner develops a new perspective on life after coming into contact with a mysterious presence at his newest assignment.

IAN DAILEY

## LGBTQ+



## Beautiful Dreamers

Minrose Gwin, Hub City Press (AUG 27)  
Hardcover \$28 (304pp)  
979-888574036-4

In Minrose Gwin's rich coming-of-age novel *Beautiful Dreamers*, a precocious girl navigates the tense atmospheres of 1950s Mississippi.

After her father abandons her family, Mem and her mother, Virginia, return to the small Gulf Coast town where Virginia grew up. There, liberal Virginia rebuffs her bigoted parents to make a home with her best friend, Mac, who is gay. Active in the civil rights movement, Mac undertakes adolescent Mem's education too. Though Mem thrives in her new, unconventional family situation, their cozy life is unsettled by vicious bigotry—and by a handsome confidence man who mesmerizes Virginia and Mac. Although attuned to trouble in the outside world, the adults prove unable to see the threat before them until too late.

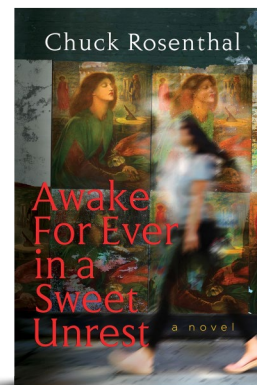
A vibrant heroine, Mem is strong and savvy. Born missing two fingers on one hand—she calls it her “paw”—Mem is whip-smart and displays an uncanny ability to understand and talk to plants and animals, among them Mac's cat—a touch of magical realism in an otherwise serious tale. And others, including the cat, are characterized in striking ways as well. Even the confidence man is a complex figure, oozing both charm and danger.

Mem and the adults shuffle between Mississippi and nearby New Orleans, where they escape the stifling atmosphere of their small town. The descriptions of the settings are evocative and sensory, covering the scent of the gulf and the sweetness of beignets. Still, there's a dark undercurrent to Mem's experiences as she learns about racism, homophobia, and the dangers facing girls and women.

*Beautiful Dreamers* is a haunting historical novel whose memorable heroine further illuminates a troubled period in the South.

PAULA MARTINAC

## LITERARY



## Awake For Ever in a Sweet Unrest

Chuck Rosenthal, Walton Well Press (SEP 3) Hardcover \$29.99 (106pp)  
978-1-964295-00-8

In Chuck Rosenthal's provocative novel *Awake For Ever in a Sweet Unrest*, a girl explores her connection to the Romantic poets.

Beatriz does unpaid work cataloging books in a basement library. There, the rows of books serve as portals that connect her to Romantic poets, including Percy and Mary Shelley and Lord Byron. But as Beatriz grows more reliant on her new friends, she starts to feel more at home in the nineteenth century than in the twenty-first.

Beatriz's connection to the poets is used to reflect on the immortality of books. The writers she interacts with are pictures of vitality. And the prose is lyrical, rich in analogies and metaphors: the way a light falls is compared to the white wing of a swan; Beatriz's fear is akin to that of a foal in front of an open corral gate. Complex conversations follow the same pattern, exemplifying the speakers' varied vocabularies well.

Though their exchanges evade realism, Beatriz's time with the poets is made tangible thanks to detailed descriptions, as of a garden full of fruit trees and the feeling of a warm summer breeze. Fewer details are shared about her twenty-first-century life; she is anchored in the past, and her present existence assumes an ethereal quality. After she undergoes pain and loss, she becomes sympathetic to her poet friends; Mary Shelley warns, “We're all ghosts here, monsters, even you. Nothing lasts. If everything lasts forever, then yet nothing lasts. Only our longing.” Beatriz knows that she must seek closure.

In the allegorical novel *Awake For Ever in a Sweet Unrest*, a reader's unlikely connections to the past illuminate questions about life, love, and books.

CAROLINA CIUCCI





## Before the Mango Ripens

Afabwaje Kurian, Dzanc Books (SEP 24)  
Hardcover \$27.95 (332pp)  
978-1-950539-99-4

In Afabwaje Kurian's novel *Before the Mango Ripens*, Nigerians fight against white American missionaries for control over their country's future.

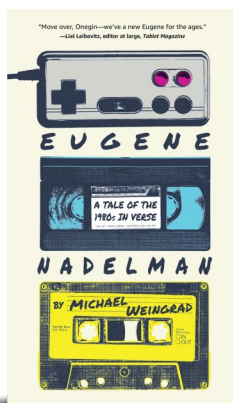
"Transition [is] afoot in Nigeria" in 1971, just after the nation's independence. Nigerian "nationals" assume positions of power in churches, schools, and hospitals. In Rabata, however, Reverend Jim refuses to allow Zanya to be a preacher, both because he thinks the locals aren't ready to lead and because he doubts Zanya's story that God allowed him to escape unscathed from a fire.

Zanya is further caught between Reverend Jim and the laborers who go on strike when the reverend refuses to pay fair wages. The mounting tension reaches a boiling point when Zanya and the reverend try to bring each other down by exposing each other's secrets. Meanwhile, in Rabata's clinic, one physician, Nelson, respects his colleague, Tebeya, though she remains secondary to him despite her demonstrable skills.

While some of Rabata's missionaries hold liberal views, the locals are aware that regardless of how well-meaning the foreigners may be, it is not their place to decide Nigeria's path. When Tebeya discovers an unsavory fact about Nelson, she sets out to remove him from his position. And Jummai, a servant for a missionary family and Zanya's former lover, hatches a plan to escape her squalid surroundings, rebelling against both racial and gender hierarchies.

Despite its two distinct groups of locals and foreigners and its setting amid massive changes, *Before the Mango Ripens* is a historical novel that avoids predictable oppositions. Its characters' relationships and internal qualities are complex, its locals speak in indigenous Gbagyi, and its focus is realistic throughout. It depicts an array of individual viewpoints, desires, and motivations, spotlighting the challenges of political self-determination and personal fulfillment with skill.

YELENA FURMAN



## Eugene Nadelman A Tale of the 1980s in Verse

Michael Weingrad, Paul Dry Books (SEP 17)  
Softcover \$16.95 (134pp)  
978-1-58988-193-8

In Michael Weingrad's slim, nostalgic literary novel *Eugene Nadelman*, a nerdy Jewish boy comes of age in 1980s Philadelphia.

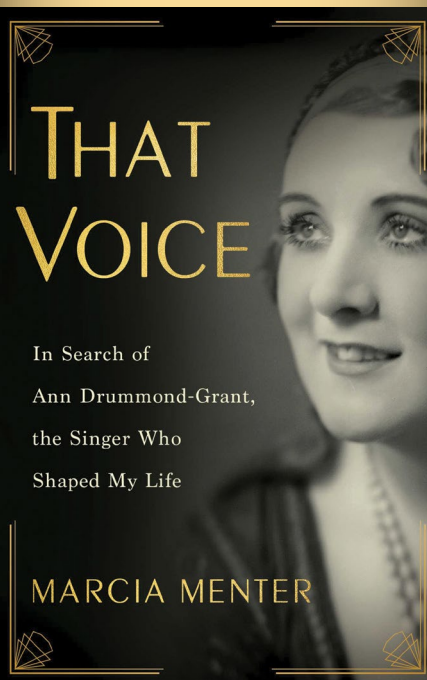
Eugene shares his first name, and the book its format, with Alexander Pushkin's novel-in-verse *Eugene Onegin*. His youth is marked by experiences like a formative first crush, meeting a girl at his cousin's bar mitzvah in the suburbs, his first game of spin the bottle, and taking part in role-playing games with his friends.

This is a wistful and emotionally resonant novel that finds true poetry in teenage life. Its epic is split into several chapters that are peppered with pop-culture references. The narrator sometimes breaks the fourth wall to explain the parallels between his life and Eugene's, too: "Indeed, the sentimental journey / that was my early childhood / commenced with Big Bird, Bert, and Ernie." And when Eugene and his friends play *Dungeons & Dragons*, the scene is interspersed with snippets of their conversations at the table and peeks into their in-game adventures: "It uses the imagination / as well as polyhedral dice / and miniature for more precise / results to build a joint narration." A rivalry between Eugene and another player with a crush on the same girl bleeds into the game, with their characters competing as proxies for her affection. But even when the circumstances seem to look up for the young couple, their interests diverge; their plans to spend summer at camp together fall through. Such everyday dramas, so critical in Eugene's young life, are given weight throughout.

Told through iambic verse and grounded in its time and place, the novel *Eugene Nadelman* pays homage to Pushkin with its story of a 1980s boyhood.

JEFF FLEISCHER

"An utterly compelling memoir."  
—Helena Nelson,  
HappenStance Press



"A captivating coming-of-age saga about life trying to imitate art, with poignantly mixed results."

—*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

"This witty, resonant, beautifully written book will appeal to many, especially readers with musical or artistic aspirations, grappling with understanding who they are."

—*Library Journal* (starred review)

"One of the most difficult tasks for any writer is to try to render the sound of music on the printed page. *That Voice* does so."

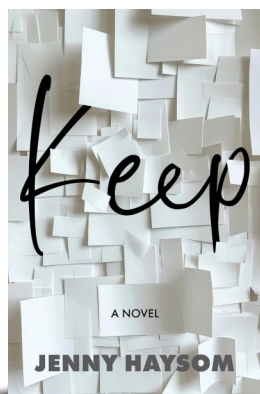
—*Jewish Book Council* (starred review)

**marciamenter.com**



ISBN: 978-1-64742-662-0 • \$17.95  
Available now from Simon & Schuster

## LITERARY



## Keep

Jenny Haysom, House of Anansi Press  
(OCT 1) Softcover \$18.99 (280pp)  
978-1-4870-1242-7

For the central trio in Jenny Haysom's astute and appealing novel *Keep*, held and released secrets and possessions threaten to disrupt the course of life.

Harriet, a poet in her eighties, is slipping into dementia. Her son insists that it's time for her to leave her overstuffed Ottawa house and move into a nursing home. Despite her resistance, he hires a real estate agent to prepare the property for sale. Eleanor and Jacob, brought in to clear the home and stage it for photographs, deal with relationship complications of their own.

Midlife changes and money shortages force difficult decisions on Eleanor, her English professor husband, and their three daughters. And Eleanor worries about becoming invisible as she ages: "If this last chapter of her life had a theme, it would be erasure." When Eleanor's middle child gets her first period and Eleanor has a pregnancy scare, the archetypal divisions between maiden, mother, and crone are blurred.

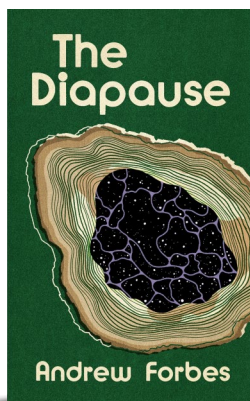
Meanwhile, Jacob is a gay architecture student whose partner, Yves, is cheating on him. With nowhere else to go, he shelters at Harriet's. The job prompts him and Eleanor to ponder what is worth salvaging. The more they sift through the old woman's belongings—including a trove of poems that she wrote after her daughter's death but never published—the more they both determine to shed what's holding them back.

The novel contrasts hoarding and generosity, remembering and letting go. It also raises the moral issue of preservation versus progress via the possibility of Harriet's home being torn down to build a condominium complex. Underneath that is a deeper question of ownership, represented by the graffiti "You are all on traditional uncended Algonquin territory."

*Keep* is a compassionate novel in which three people learn that history and memory are "fluent and fallible."

REBECCA FOSTER

## LITERARY



## The Diapause

Andrew Forbes, Invisible  
Publishing (OCT 1) Softcover \$17.95 (288pp)  
978-1-77843-050-3

*The Diapause*, Andrew Forbes's speculative fiction treatise on a postplague world, is both a grim look at the dark side of survivalist psychosis and a heartbreaking love letter to the disappearing worlds around us.

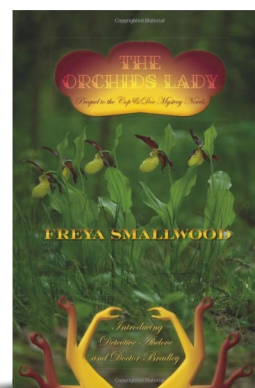
Gabe is an only child, mired in the complicated family dynamics that the first phases of an unnamed virus unearthed. His parents' decision to flee the city and take refuge at a remote family fishing cabin signals a seismic shift in the mundanity of survival and the beginning of a lasting family rift. Ensuing years find Gabe evolving through adolescent insubordination and the throes of first love, with his dissolving nuclear family backdropping his navigation through a world forced to tweak its problematic economical, geopolitical, or climate-based traditions. What results is a comprehensive novel about growing up, leaving behind what can't be changed, and moving forward despite the pain and confusion it can cause.

The force of the prose punctuates bleak prognostications on the not-too-distant future of the Western Hemisphere, here having endured systematic writhing due to earthquakes, an American migration, and a near-constant state of rain. The title references the dormancy that living things can settle into when their traditional environment is altered, with the *Diapause* placing the remnants of our recent pandemic in a theoretical light by spotlighting the tricky what-ifs that such occurrences can provoke on seemingly happy microcosms.

*The Diapause* could be read as a cautionary tale were it not for the beauty that Forbes manages to coax from beneath the unstoppable depression his speculative landscape serves. That the possibilities of the future he creates seem so achievable makes it something of a somber journey—its loneliness perhaps misconstrued as a bad thing. In fact, it's Gabe's unavoidable solitude that fuels his vigor and which Forbes writes into mesmerizing, unforgettable prose.

RYAN PRADO

## MYSTERY



## The Orchids Lady

Prequel to the Cop & Doc Mystery Novels

Freya Smallwood, TEKLA Press  
(AUG 21) Hardcover \$25.95 (345pp)  
979-898590129-0

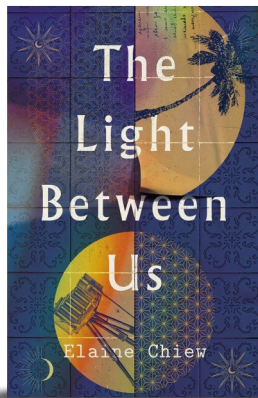
A mudslide sets off a string of unexplained violence in *The Orchids Lady*, a sun-suffused mystery novel in Freya Smallwood's Abelow and Bradley series.

Ogy Bradley is a neuroscientist and widower who returns home to find his quiet neighborhood, nestled in the shadow of Mount Reposo on the California coast, brimming with anxiety and police activity. Babby, a longtime resident, has been found dead in the hillside gardens she cultivates. The circumstances seem sinister; Bradley begins asking questions about Babby's demise, uncovering the tangled history of two orphans adopted into Babby's family and her late-life enthusiasm for genetic ancestry tests, among other peculiarities. Drawing on ties in the community and a maverick partnership with Detective Tor Abelow, a once-celebrated professional surfer, Bradley is not surprised when the death is ruled a murder—and when violence continues to haunt the neighborhood under Mount Reposo.

Steeped in the tight-knit communal bonds that grow between lifelong neighbors, this mystery captures the ebb and flow of friendships strained by fear. As suspects multiply, Bradley finds himself at odds with Ingrid, the former archaeologist who's been in his life since childhood, when he doubts the intentions of Babby's charming young niece. Elsewhere in the sprawl of characters and subplots, Abelow races to follow leads, shifting focus from jewelry thieves to city council candidates. The dense and overlapping relationships result in verisimilitude in this high-stakes murder investigation. Multilayered conversations, including witty dinner party repartee, become inseparable from the sleuthing as Abelow and Bradley are forced to unmask identities and get to the bottom of who their friends really are.

A charming mystery novel that captures the complexity of small-town communities, *The Orchids Lady* explores the secrets buried under the veneer of social life.

WILLEM MARX



## The Light Between Us

Elaine Chiew, Neem Tree Press

(SEP 10) Hardcover \$27.95 (336pp)  
978-1-915584-77-9

A Chinese photographer in colonial Singapore and a museum archivist forge a connection through their yearning, time-crossing correspondence in Elaine Chiew's mesmerizing speculative novel *The Light Between Us*.

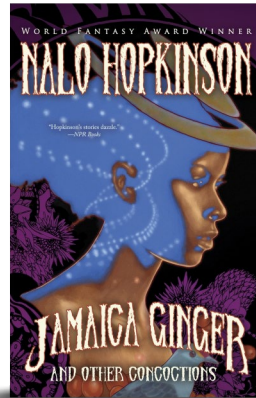
In 1920, Tian Wei runs a popular studio. When he spies a glass negative that's dated with a future time, he's curious. In 2019, Charlie is an archivist who lives among "historical ghosts." Strange glimmerings occur, and her computer receives a letter from the past, signed by Tian Wei, concerning Aiko, a missing Japanese girl. This stirs empathy within Charlie, who otherwise restrains her emotions.

Unfurling fascinating histories and layering cities upon cities (here, the post-Versailles Treaty version of Singapore is marked by anti-Japanese prejudices, a brewing Kuomintang presence, and multilingualism, whereas contemporary Singapore is a sophisticated, art-filled stage for Charlie's tense reckonings with her wealthy step-family), the novel trades between its vibrant leads. The two are similar in multiple ways—including in that they're both outsiders in their respective circles. Further, mysterious details surround Aiko's disappearance and the "quantum entanglement" that permits Charlie to learn about it.

The duo's time-defying, flourish-filled letters intensify over time. In them, Tian Wei cultivates British affectations, and Charlie employs a puzzling scientific vocabulary. As unspoken questions about how their improbable entanglement might conclude gather, a powerful theme is revealed: photographic theories allow vulnerable Charlie to make sense of her pain and desire. Though her encounters with Tian Wei are fleeting, they leave lasting imprints.

A tender, inventive exploration of diaspora histories, *The Light Between Us* is a spectral novel in which art joins two star-crossed lovers.

KAREN RIGBY



## Jamaica Ginger and Other Concoctions

Nalo Hopkinson, Tachyon Publications  
(OCT 29) Softcover \$16.95 (224pp)  
978-1-61696-426-9

A commanding short story collection, Caribbean Canadian Nalo Hopkinson's *Jamaica Ginger and Other Concoctions* blends ecological awareness, cultural heritage, and fantastical happenings.

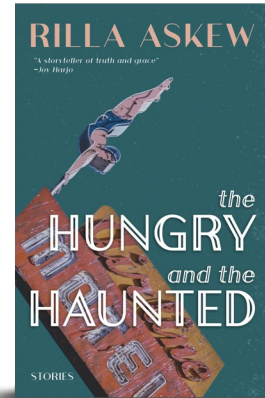
In the mordant story "Clap Back," Wenda, an art student, collects racist Black American objects for an exhibit. She brushes each with a mixture of lethal bacteria, "plasticizers, amino acids, and dissolved glucose." The items come to life with liberated vengeance: "cooning rictus" grins relax into natural smiles, while stereotypical watermelon slices are "drop-kicked into the air."

In "Pocket Universe," elderly Sadika works with an "artist caseworker" to design her final resting place. As her brain is scanned for sensations to create a relevant "burial house," Sadika remembers the salty delight of her grandmother's red peas soup. She also recalls her time as a sex worker with pride; while on "the stroll," she supported herself and her children with her skills and the pleasure she offered. And "Jamaica Ginger" (coauthored by Nisi Shawl) is set in quasi-historical New Orleans, where Nikola Tesla-inspired receivers, wireless transmitters, and automatons challenge the antiquity of kerosene lamps and train porters. Here, a woman uses her fascination with machinery to push past the limitations that society places on her gender.

Climate change is a recurring theme: there are diseased, parched landscapes and ravaging floods. Many of the characters are resourceful women of color who are determined to improve their troubled environments; they summon remarkable scientific, technological, and mechanical abilities to heal others and solve problems.

Enriched with a marrow of emotion, the short stories of *Jamaica Ginger and Other Concoctions* move beyond bleak dystopian landscapes into a curious universe marked by damage and possibility.

MEG NOLA



## The Hungry and the Haunted Stories

Rilla Askew, Belle Point Press (SEP 17)  
Softcover \$17.95 (160pp)  
978-1-960215-17-8

The intimate short stories of Rilla Askew's *The Hungry and the Haunted* illuminate lives touched by grief, guilt, and social change.

Set in Oklahoma and the American Southwest during the 1970s and told across multiple perspectives, these diverse stories follow outcasts and travelers whose lives and relationships are defined by their settings. The tumult of the era is handled with depth as people grapple with their personal and shared histories, attempting to build new lives from the rubble of grief and tragedy. And particular focus is placed on Southwestern Indigenous people and teenage girls on the outskirts of society.

In one story, an elderly man reckons with his past and his role in the destruction of Indigenous culture. In "Tahlequah Triptych," a family's stories are retold across three generations; it's a compelling exploration of the interconnectedness of a place and its people. Elsewhere, young, grieving women attempt to sever their connections to their pasts, but instead find that they are tethered beyond understanding to their family and terrestrial roots.

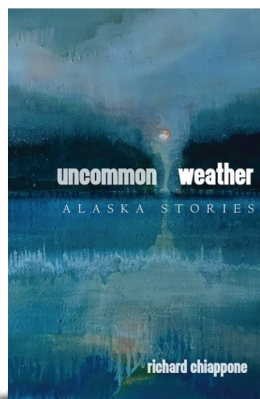
The characterizations are rich; they focus on how people contend with the specters of their pasts. Throughout, complicated backstories and deep wounds are addressed with care and delicacy. The prose rides the line between lush and restrained, making careful use of descriptive and metaphorical language to root the stories in their places and times. Subtle details and specificity flesh out this multifaceted portrait of Oklahoma further, preserving a precarious sense of it at a political and social crossroads.

The challenging, beautiful short stories collected in *The Hungry and the Haunted* cover fraught histories that play out in individual lives and linger into the present.

BELLA MOSES



## SHORT STORIES



## Uncommon Weather

### Alaska Stories

Richard Chiappone, University of Alaska Press (SEP 16) Softcover \$19.95 (166pp) 978-1-64642-636-2

In Richard Chiappone's dark and humorous short story collection *Uncommon Weather*, people battle isolation, boredom, and existential anxiety.

These twelve intricate stories are set in Alaska's small towns and vast wildernesses and explore deep isolation. There are empathetic characters who are flawed and just shy of irredeemable; there are people with fresh wounds whose futures seem dismal. Climate change and infidelity cause existential insecurity too.

In the haunting story "Little Wing," a bush doctor misses her flight out of Anchorage and is left to sit at a restaurant watching the waitstaff try to feed a fallen nestling; thousands of miles away, her daughter's funeral takes place in Buffalo. In "Time on the Water," a man moves into his cabin on the Kenai Peninsula to fish his remaining years away in the wake of an amicable divorce and a terminal cancer diagnosis. There, he develops an unexpected appetite for outlaw life. In "Uncommon Weather," an environmental conservationist, disillusioned after years of dedication without impact, gives herself permission to have an extramarital affair unhindered by shame.

The stories' twists are a vicious combination of unforeseeable and inevitable. Herein, even formidable senses of humor come up short in the face of brutal tragedies and harrowing discoveries. Still, most of the endings skew hopeful, if lonely, with weighted optimism. This configuration is to a large extent shaped by the distance, jobs, and wilderness recreation that's unique to Alaska's geography, where relationships take on new stresses and significance.

Marked by alienation and a dark sense of humor, *Uncommon Weather* is a haunting collection of short stories about human burdens in a far corner of the world.

BEN LINDER

## THRILLER



## Gaslight

Miles Joris-Peyrafitte, Sara Shepard Blackstone Publishing (SEP 17) Hardcover \$26.99 (340pp), 979-821218922-4

In Miles Joris-Peyrafitte and Sara Shepard's thriller *Gaslight*, a power-seeking cult exploits its members.

Having escaped her controlled past, Rebecca lives a quiet life with her husband and two children in Nevada. This changes when her old friend, Danny, shows up unannounced, bringing with her reminders of earlier years. Rebecca tries her best to help Danny, but she soon realizes that Danny is under the influence of the Infinite Spiritual Being community, a cult whose members are forbidden contact with the outside world. Rebecca wonders about Danny's true intentions and tries to keep those she loves out of harm's way.

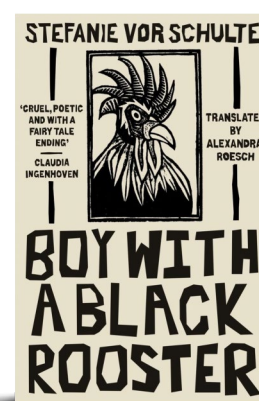
Members of the ISB are manipulated by the cult's leader, Ben, who assures them that they "deserve to be happy." The novel's resultant unnerving tone mimics Danny and Rebecca's inner feelings. Herein, everyone has a secret; as the story continues, questions are answered. Certain plot points start to lose their enigma as they're repeated, though, as with the secret that Rebecca keeps from her husband regarding how she and Danny know each other.

However, other elements of the story that seem drawn out or discursive are revealed not to be so: a flashback to a conversation regarding cookies between Rebecca and another person proves pivotal, revealing characteristics like humility and self-awareness. And as different perspectives and stories are incorporated, stark contrasts are drawn between the cult members' once-normal lives and their existences once they are reshaped by the cult. Further, rapid timeline shifts are used to deepen understanding of the cult and the extent of its power over its victims.

*Gaslight* is a gripping thriller in which a woman once controlled by fear confronts her past.

DANICA MORRIS

## TRANSLATIONS



## Boy with a Black Rooster

Stefanie vor Schulte, Alexandra Roesch (Translator), The Indigo Press (SEP 10) Softcover \$17.99 (192pp) 978-1-911648-77-2

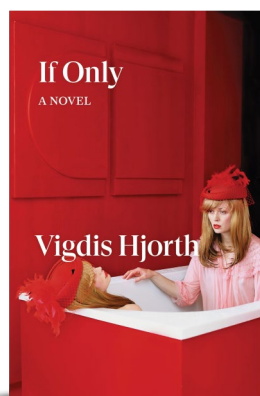
A fairy tale with an edge, Stefanie vor Schulte's *Boy with a Black Rooster* explores a vast land afflicted by cruelty and ill fortune.

Martin is a kindhearted orphan whose father went insane and killed the rest of his family. Looked upon as a bringer of bad luck by the locals, Martin, with his steadfast companion, a rooster he can communicate with, seeks his fortune outside their village, joining up with a traveling painter. What follows is a succession of dreamlike and nightmarish episodes in which Martin, his rooster, and the painter roam from village to village, seeking a local girl who was abducted by mysterious horsemen. Their quest takes them through skull-filled ravines, forests populated by werewolves, a town in which the dead are posed for family portraits, and to a kingdom ruled by a deranged princess who sacrifices children.

*Boy with a Black Rooster's* fabulistic incidents are relayed in a gritty tone that also accommodates humorous touches, including a local jester and hangman who is ordered to execute himself. Martin's quest is the focus, but the story's true tension comes from the duel between his innocence and the evil in the land that threatens to stain his soul. For every dark act, as with the princess barricading her kingdom and starving its inhabitants, there's a counterbalancing act of compassion, as when Martin helps one of the princess's subjects give birth during hard times.

Culminating in a tense showdown that takes place during a grueling "sleep game," the narrative circles back to Martin's home to answer lingering questions about his origins. *Boy with a Black Rooster* ventures to some terrifying places, but in true fairy-tale fashion, it also reassures and inspires thanks to its hero's humility and valor.

HO LIN



## If Only

Vigdis Hjorth, Charlotte Barslund (Translator), Verso Books (SEP 3) Softcover \$19.95 (352pp), 978-1-83976-888-0

In Vigdis Hjorth's powerful novel *If Only*, a playwright develops an obsession with an older professor that spirals into an all-consuming love affair.

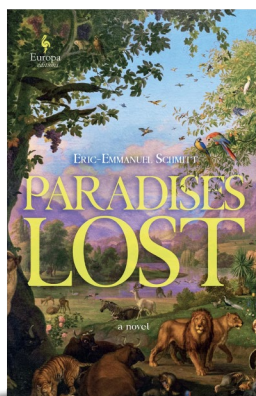
At thirty years old, Ida is married with two children. She has a successful career as a writer of radio plays. Yet she feels unfulfilled, waiting "for the heartbreak that will turn her into her true self." At a seminar, she meets Arnold, an older professor. The two share a night together before returning home to their respective spouses. Later, Ida receives a series of postcards from Arnold and is surprised by the depth of feeling they stir in her.

Soon, thoughts of the professor consume her days and her marriage dissolves. Month after month, Ida attempts to draw her lover to her through letters and phone calls. But Arnold is reluctant to return her adoration, offering her only enough crumbs of affection to sustain her bottomless love. For years, they meet at conferences alone. Ida becomes paranoid and frantic, driving away even her closest friends and family. Still, she remains confident that the day will come when Arnold will realize his true feelings for her. After three long years, he does, and the two travel from city to city, embroiled in a disastrous relationship that leaves them both scarred.

The narrative makes sparing, effective use of jumps in time to give a sense of the larger trajectory of Ida's life. This device lends the novel perspective: Ida's feelings shift, and she begins to envision a life beyond the endless circles of infatuation and abuse.

Feverish and intoxicating, *If Only* is a novel about the depths of a life-altering devotion and the connections between love, creativity, and self-making.

BELLA MOSES



## Paradises Lost

Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt; Steven Rendall, Addie Leak (Translators), Europa Editions (OCT 8) Hardcover \$30 (480pp) 978-1-60945-849-2

The first tome in an epic series set to cover the span of human history, Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt's riveting novel *Paradises Lost* introduces an immortal who's grown weary of human foibles, but who still recognizes the wondrous potential in community.

Known in multiple mythologies as the man who survived a world-consuming flood, Noam achieved immortality by accident. Before that, he was the son of a respected chief, living in an idyllic community beside a worshiped lake. But his childhood respect for his father's innovations gave way to disillusionment when his father claimed Noura, whom Noam loved, as his own. He retreated to the wilds, where his uncle, Barak—a gentle giant—taught him the benefits of depending on nature. Challenging his father for the chief's spot, he envisioned a new, more equitable future for his people.

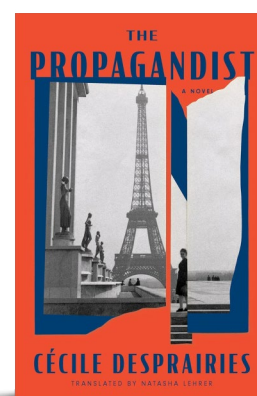
But then the flood came.

Though its scope is grand, this series opener rests most in the Neolithic period, introducing Noam's origins and hinting at adventures to come. Footnotes suggest grandiose future encounters with historical greats, some of whom Noam credits himself with influencing, including Jean-Jacques Rousseau. There are peeks at his present in the climate-changed world and hints at future confrontations with terrorists too.

Still, herein, the formation and maturation of Noam's worldview—cultivated and weathered over "millennia [spent] witnessing technological, biological, and medical progress"—is the primary concern. He "does not idealize the ancients' teaching and harbors no nostalgia." Forced to persist in state of "human emptiness," he thinks most of Noura, who was "infinite women, one day submissive, another tyrannical, lascivious, morose, excited"—and, to him, irreplaceable.

Ambitious and engrossing, *Paradises Lost* is a magnificent series opener that introduces the man and the myth behind the story of Noah and the flood.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER



## The Propagandist

Cécile Desprairies, Natasha Lehrer (Translator), New Vessel Press (OCT 8) Softcover \$17.95 (208pp) 978-1-954404-26-7

In Cécile Desprairies's disquieting historical novel *The Propagandist*, a woman reflects on her mother's experiences as a World War II collaborator.

Coline, Lucie's youngest daughter, contrasts her mother's duplicitous past with her later life as a discontented "bourgeois housewife." For beautiful and intelligent Lucie, the German occupation of Paris was like a "fairy-tale," filled with embassy parties and excitement. Lucie, her friends, and her family cooperated with the Nazis, celebrating the roundup of France's "domineering" Jewish population.

Lucie married Friedrich, a German medical student whose interest in genetic research mirrored Hitler's racial obsessions. While Lucie studied law and biology, she also worked as a Vichy government propagandist, producing posters and other materials that linked French sentiments with Nazi dogma. But after the Allies liberated Paris, numerous collaborators were imprisoned and even executed. When Friedrich died under suspicious circumstances, Lucie was overwhelmed with grief.

Coline discusses her mother with ironic detachment. Rather than outright condemning her, she invites broader judgment through the meticulous arrangement of facts. She details how Friedrich regarded Jews as akin to "laboratory mice" or invasive "tubercular bacilli," and how even after Lucie's marriage to Coline's father, Lucie still yearned for Friedrich and their fascist dreams. As an expert at personal transformation, Lucie also reworked her own image while helping her "clan" of collaborators assume new postwar identities.

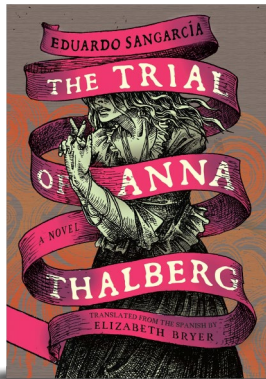
The novel has a serpentine tension, with adaptable yet controlling Lucie as its most pernicious and fascinating character. Extending from the 1940s to the early 2000s, the story implies that the actions of some French wartime collaborators were obfuscated, ignored, or dismissed.

The chilling novel *The Propagandist* reveals a twisted legacy of wartime rationalization and collusion.

MEG NOLA



## TRANSLATIONS



## ★ The Trial of Anna Thalberg

Eduardo Sangarcía, Elizabeth Bryer (Translator), Restless Books (SEP 10) Hardcover \$22 (176pp) 978-1-63206-373-1

Misogyny and religious conviction are vicious bedfellows in Eduardo Sangarcía's horrifying, humbling literary novel *The Trial of Anna Thalberg*, based on the Würzburg witch trials that tore through poor populations with their insatiable accusations.

A few years after being brought to a strange village by her husband, Klaus, beautiful Anna is condemned as a witch by a jealous neighbor who sees danger in her honey-colored eyes. Other neighbors rush to add their false testimonies, too. Only the priest is willing to assist Klaus in protesting Anna's innocence to those who would rather make martyrs than mistakes.

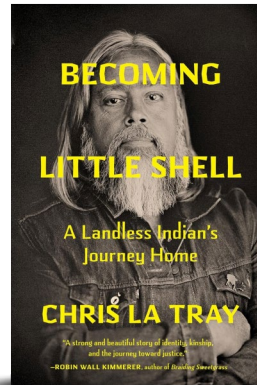
In the jail and torture chamber, time stretches, compresses, and curls back on itself for Anna, who only speaks the truth. These terrifying periods are represented in alternating columns of questions and answers that appear in fevered disarray. The confessors so want to find evil in the story of Anna's simple, honest life that they interpret her childhood loneliness as an invitation to the devil, her befriendings squirrels and birds as letting evil in, and her parents' deaths as a punishment.

Still, Anna keeps speaking the truth. She is told that the Bible says she should not speak—more “proof” of her deal with the devil. She refuses to make a false confession to end her pain. Those in charge, though, view “woman [as] a cathedral constructed over a cesspool, a palace whose gardens and fountains all lead to the same hell,” so her refusal is an admission, too. Protest is futile, all is in vain. But the powerful are unwitting: when Anna, bodily broken but spiritually unbreakable, is taken to the pyre to satisfy their fears, they condemn themselves with her.

*The Trial of Anna Thalberg* is an inferno of a historical novel, burning through the lies told about defiant women across the centuries.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY &amp; MEMOIR



## ★ Becoming Little Shell A Landless Indian's Journey Home

Chris La Tray, Milkweed Editions (AUG 20) Hardcover \$28 (256pp), 978-1-57131-398-0

Métis storyteller Chris La Tray's expansive memoir *Becoming Little Shell* began as a compassionate inquiry into his father's rejection of the family's Native American heritage. Haunted by questions of identity after his father's death, La Tray took small steps to learn about his Métis and Little Shell ancestors. He interviewed the living, studied the work of scholars, and interrogated primary sources. Joining the Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians and their tenacious campaign for federal recognition, he came to an understanding of how his father's communities had been tormented by people, policies, and governments bent on his culture's annihilation.

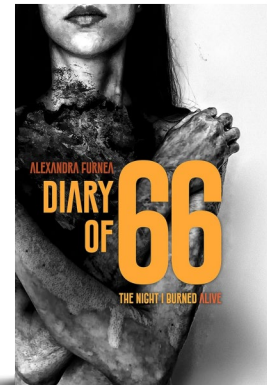
Conversational and recursive, the book's emotional tone ranges from sorrow for La Tray's relatives' suffering to anger at the US government's greed and duplicity. La Tray expresses the thrill of discovering an ancestor's rejection of a one-sided treaty and the glow of pride in his father's survival. His family and people covered, uncovered, and recovered a past that is both traumatic and triumphant.

La Tray takes careful steps over and around linear time too. The book's singular achievement is in the throughlines drawn between past and present diverse communities who suffered under extractive policies. Connections are made, for example, between three separate events: the eighteenth-century Métis moving camp when the people were forced from their settlements; the Little Shell people being unenrolled from the Chippewa and made landless after La Tray's ancestor didn't sign onto a revised treaty; and the unhomed people setting up camps in contemporary Missoula.

Heartbreaking, infuriating, and remarkable, *Becoming Little Shell* is a memoir that's packed with historical details, transcending and amplifying a personal quest to understand a family's past.

MICHELE SHARPE

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY &amp; MEMOIR



## Diary of 66 The Night I Burned Alive

Alexandra Furnea, Gaudium Publishing (OCT 15) Softcover \$19.99 (240pp) 978-1-59211-436-8

Alexandra Furnea links the nightmarish suffering of burn victims to the pervasive impacts of statewide corruption in *Diary of 66*, her memoir about surviving the 2015 Colectiv Club fire.

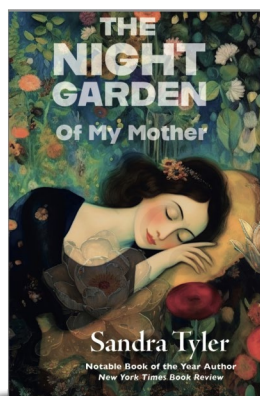
Widespread bribery throughout Romania meant that building codes and safety regulations went unenforced everywhere. Furnea, a music journalist, was covering a concert at Colectiv in Bucharest when a spark from pyrotechnics ignited flammable soundproofing material. The venue was packed, and people panicked, stampeding toward the club's single narrow exit. Sixty-four people were killed; Furnea and over 100 others who survived sustained mutilating burns. And Furnea was one of many who faced further ravages in Romanian hospitals where medical care itself was influenced by malignant corruption.

The prose is lyrical and compelling, even when describing horrific injuries in unflinching, disturbing detail. Before the fire, Furnea's generation already felt cornered, living in a corrupt state “so overwhelmed by evil, yet filled with what is most intimately ours” that escape was impossible. Such political issues are linked to the agony of people trapped and burned at the Colectiv Club, and then trapped again by devastating injuries and a punitive, incompetent medical system.

Furnea's voice is both urgent and elegiac as she recalls the friends who perished at the site of the fire, who didn't survive hospitalization, or who survived with scars: “The sensation of flames on naked skin never leaves us, it's nestled there, in our wounds.” As the death toll mounted in the weeks after the fire, she imagined “drawing bloody cross after bloody cross in the calendar of our souls, to mark the dates for mourning. The fire keeps engulfing us even after it was extinguished.”

*Diary of 66* is a powerful memoir about a catastrophic fire that connects the personal suffering of the victims and their families to political malfeasance.

MICHELE SHARPE



## [The Night Garden of My Mother](#)

Sandra Tyler, Pierian Springs Press  
(OCT 23) Hardcover \$29 (288pp)  
978-1-953136-77-0

Sandra Tyler's intimate and affecting memoir *The Night Garden of My Mother* is about caring for her aged mother as she slid into frailty and dementia. Nestled within this fractured daily life of emergencies and interruptions, Tyler found both mysteries and gifts.

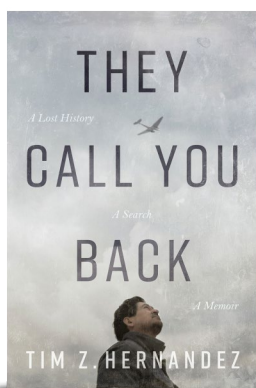
Tyler's conflicted relationship with her mother, forged of love and will, was her measure of her own life. Her mother's dementia further fractured Tyler's sense of herself: it seemed like her best was never enough. She was devastated when her mother expressed anger over a decision made to protect her, declaring "You are not my daughter anymore"; an hour later, she was once again her mother's daughter. Her days became consumed by disruption and worry.

Tyler writes about the fear she felt while anticipating the next phone call, eighty-mile trip to her mother's house, and emergency room visit. Once, her mother almost bled out due to prescribed blood thinners but did not remember that she had fallen. Indeed, her mother dealt with forgetfulness, fear, and paranoia; she required constant vigilance. Thus, Tyler's needs, and her family's needs, were set aside. A new caregiver changed the power dynamic in their mother-daughter relationship, though. Tyler, at first resentful, came to respect this new person's skill and wisdom.

The book works toward healing: after her mother's death, Tyler discovered a clue regarding the source of her family's generational wounds. She came to better understand her mother's struggle for freedom and authenticity. Despite the horrors and cruelty of dementia, her mother, an artist, had left her a gift: memories of moments of shared ecstasy over the world's beauty. This, Tyler wrote, was what she would miss most.

*The Night Garden of My Mother* is an emotive memoir about the entwined nature of generational woundedness and love.

KRISTINE MORRIS



## [They Call You Back](#) [A Lost History, A Search,](#) [A Memoir](#)

Tim Z. Hernandez, University of Arizona Press (SEP 17) Hardcover \$30 (272pp)  
978-0-8165-5361-7

Tim Z. Hernandez's *They Call You Back* expands upon his prior documentary novel *All They Will Call You*, about the deaths of twenty-eight Mexican nationals in a California plane crash.

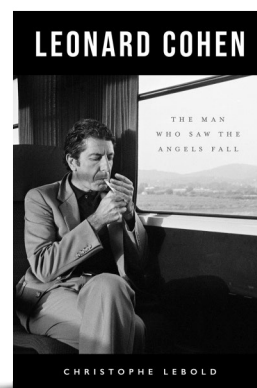
In January of 1948, a plane carrying Mexican workers crashed in Los Gatos Canyon, California. There were no survivors. The passengers were on their way back to Mexico after laboring in the United States; unidentified in newspaper accounts, they were buried as "deportees" in a mass grave. Upon learning of the tragedy in 2010, Hernandez began a complicated and often circuitous quest, trying to find the workers' families.

In this book, the continued search for the Los Gatos families is linked to Hernandez's personal and ancestral complexities. With eloquent self-assessment, he writes about his issues with alcoholism and artistic identity, along with his separation from the mother of his two children. He recounts the economic struggles of his grandparents and parents and the 1995 police-involved death of his uncle. And he elaborates on racial validity and erasure, noting the longstanding minimization of people of color.

The memoir is rich with history, vivifying those who live and work in Mexico and California's Central Valley. Hernandez's grandfather was a Korean War veteran with PTSD; he believed that the appearance of a butterfly brought an omen of death. And before boarding the fateful 1948 flight, Alberto Raigoza Carlos could handle "guns, horses, harvests, embroidery, paintbrushes, and just about any task that was put in his way." Cultural traditions and the speaking of Spanish are contrasted with life in "el Norte," where assimilation into American society changed family dynamics.

With mystical and factual intensity, the moving memoir *They Call You Back* is about individual purpose and collective heritage.

MEG NOLA



## [Leonard Cohen](#) [The Man Who Saw the](#) [Angels Fall](#)

Christophe Lebold, ECW Press (SEP 5)  
Softcover \$29.95 (500pp)  
978-1-77041-744-1

Christophe Lebold's biography of one of popular music's greatest songwriters is outstanding, grounding its subject in the historical times that formed him and his art.

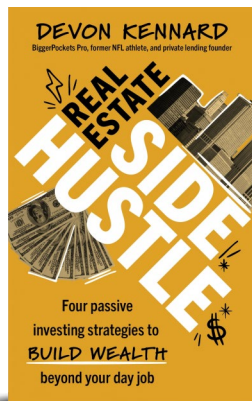
Following Leonard Cohen from his childhood in Canada through to his years as a promising young poet and novelist, the book reveals his emergence as a live musician in the late 1960s. It does so without a reportorial overcast, telling the story in the form of an epic odyssey, with each time and place contained with an eye toward adventure. For example, Cohen's time living and writing in the Chelsea Hotel earns an extended comparison to Dante's *Divine Comedy*: his journeying between floors, and the various artists who come and go, turn the hotel into a way station of inspiration and chance encounters. Snippets of Cohen's life and relationships that later came up in songs are treated like symbolic and meaningful breadcrumbs, including the loss of his blue raincoat, his famous dalliance with Janis Joplin, and the letters sent to his muse, Marianne, in Greece.

The book ties many of the themes reflected in Cohen's life and writing to the events of his early years, including his love of women, his Judaism, his mother's battle with depression, and his fascination with Zen and Catholic symbolism. Lebold combines his own conversations with the artist, extensive research, and myriad references to Cohen's poems, songs, and literary touchpoints together to form a cohesive whole. "At the heart of it" all is the story of "an undercover poet who tried to revive mass culture and rock music with the art of King David."

*Leonard Cohen* is a literary masterpiece—the seminal, comprehensive biography of a multi-talented man who wrote more than his share of literary masterpieces himself.

JEFF FLEISCHER

## BUSINESS &amp; ECONOMICS



## Real Estate Side Hustle

### Four Passive Investing Strategies to Build Wealth Beyond Your Day Job

Devon Kennard, BiggerPockets (OCT 15)  
Hardcover \$26.99 (272pp)  
978-1-960178-68-8

A motivational guide to the world of real estate investment that's intent on lowering the barrier to entry, Devon Kennard's *Real Estate Side Hustle* creates a blueprint for buying, selling, and renting property without shirking career and family commitments.

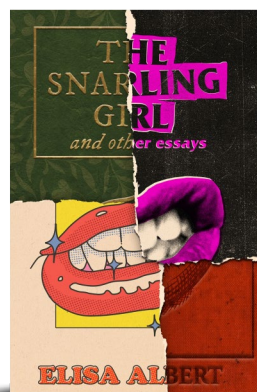
Inspired by the extraordinary time constraints Kennard navigated as an NFL linebacker, the book develops a self-contained system for becoming involved in real estate in as little as five hours a week. Financial advice that's applicable to all prospective investors is integrated into its passive investment track, defined by specific practices, plans, and financial structures. Advanced techniques are broken down alongside clear dos and don'ts that provide guardrails for the inexperienced investor. "Do not even consider buying an investment property," the book chastens, without a grasp of investment-specific vocabulary and terms.

In constructing its broad passive investor toolkit, popular, time-intensive strategies like short-term rentals, low-money-down creative financing, and BRRRR are adapted or excluded and replaced with approaches that preserve a passive investor's most precious asset: time. *As Real Estate Side Hustle reveals, there are many investment methods that do not require becoming a landlord or investing sweat equity.* While some are rarefied—like joining syndications, buying commercial properties, and becoming a private money lender (PML)—deliberate tweaks can turn many labor-intensive investments passive ("Hiring a bookkeeper will eliminate almost all the administrative work"). Tied together by an experienced investor's charismatic voice, the book connects the dots between long-term financial goals and short-term strategies that can fit the most demanding schedule.

A user's guide to passive real estate investing, *Real Estate Side Hustle* busts myths about how much time and effort is required to buy and sell property.

WILLEM MARX

## ESSAYS



## The Snarling Girl

Elisa Albert, CLASH Books (AUG 27)  
Hardcover \$26.95 (194pp)  
978-1-960988-06-5

Elisa Albert's ranging essay collection *The Snarling Girl* includes sixteen pieces published over the last ten years in venues including *Longreads*, New York magazine's *The Cut*, *The Forward*, and Lit Hub. Their topics include feminist medicine, the music of Ani DiFranco, growing up in Los Angeles, and life in Albany.

The entries vary in length but are consistent in tone—incisive, wise, stark in their honesty, unapologetic about Albert's Judaism, and feminist. The book opens with "The Snarling Girl: Notes on Ambition," which deconstructs the concept of ambition and what this looks like in certain literary circles. It also takes aim at the writing community, saying "the fact remains: whatever impresses you always illuminates your ambition."

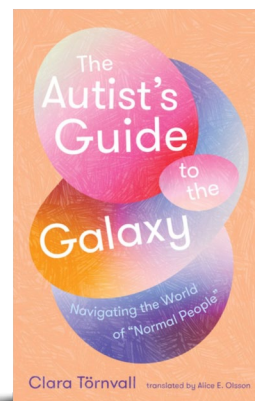
In "Vagina Jail," Albert writes about becoming a doula and cultural views about childbirth; in "Make It Mean Something," she explores social media and smartphones while also contemplating faith through a modern lens. "On Not Getting What I Wanted" addresses secondary infertility in a beautiful and painful way: "What I wanted was a baby. ...I didn't tell a lot of people about my wanting because A) I did not want to be defined by it, and B) It hurt so, so bad." And the timely "Five Recent Encounters, or 'One of Those People'" illustrates the pervasiveness of antisemitism.

While there is snark to be found in these essays, they avoid bitterness and vitriol in favor of wry humor and honest self-reflection. There's balance throughout, and each piece in the collection is worthy of the time it takes to read it—yes, even the essay about Philip Roth.

*The Snarling Girl* is Elisa Albert at her finest: vulnerable and acerbic, devastating and insightful. Its essays blend cultural criticism with memoir elements, balancing viewpoints from both insider and outside observer perspectives.

JAIME HERNDON

## FAMILY &amp; RELATIONSHIPS



## The Autist's Guide to the Galaxy

### Navigating the World of Ordinary People

Clara Törnvall, Alice E. Olsson (Translator)  
Scribe (SEP 3) Softcover \$20 (208pp)  
978-1-957363-89-9

Clara Törnvall's cheeky, illuminating social manual *The Autist's Guide to the Galaxy* turns the tables on autism conversations by focusing on how to engage with neurotypical people.

Because articles about neurodiversity are often penned by non-autists—sometimes with the implicit directive to "help" those with diagnoses conform themselves more to the rest of the world—Swedish author, producer, and autist Törnvall steps in with lighthearted realism. Here, neurotypicals are explained as the ones who can't help but seem different. Törnvall examines their fashion, how their thoughts and conversations track along other paths (cuing in on tone, subtext, and body language), and their penchant for assuming that others are like them.

Frequent topics surround the discrepancy between what neurotypicals say versus what they intend or hope that others will understand. Whether covering perplexing neurotypical habits of making "small talk" (in which connections are sought, but without too much depth) or of telling white lies and thinking that other people must have hidden agendas, these discussions are candid and eye-opening. Other useful subjects glance at autist dating, education, and self-advocacy. The result is both a humorous semi-anthropological study and a valuable survey that includes quotations from fellow autists about their experiences. Misunderstandings that arise—as when neurotypicals give directions that are then interpreted in literal terms but whose real meaning they thought would be clear enough, or in relationship scenarios, where an autist is expected to "read" what isn't being said—inspire empathy for the autist's plight. Indeed, here, amid the gentle skewering of people's sometimes illogical ways, there are real insights to glean in considering people's inherent differences.

With its tips to help autists thrive, *The Autist's Guide to the Galaxy* is an encouraging, entertaining overview of common social challenges.

KAREN RIGBY





### Ending the Pursuit Asexuality, Aromanticism and Agender Identity

Michael Paramo, Unbound (SEP 2)  
Softcover \$18 (239pp), 978-1-80018-285-1

Michael Paramo's personalized social science study *Ending the Pursuit* is an intersectional analysis of the history and culture of asexual, aromantic, and agender identities.

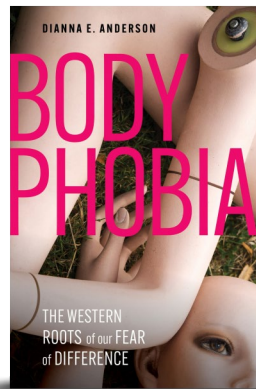
Interweaving historical references, scientific studies, internet discourses, memoir, and poetry, *the book aims to unearth the origins of asexuality, aromanticism, and agender identities while dismantling misconceptions about them.* The history of these marginalized identities is intricate; their portrayal through Western, cis-heteropatriarchal lenses only obscures their representation. To illuminate them better, Paramo breaks down aspects of attraction from both historical and contemporary perspectives, showing what such identities have to teach about sexual and gender expectations today.

Moments of vulnerability breathe life into the text; most effective is Paramo's inclusion of personal anecdotes. His candid account of his family's acceptance of his gay identity contrasted with their rejection due to his asexuality underscores the widespread misunderstanding of these identities. Furthermore, Paramo's interspersed poetry infuses the text with an artistic and vulnerable energy that counters presumptions of coldness that are often misattributed to asexual, aromantic, and agender people.

The text veers more academic with its historical analyses, which is authoritative if lacking some accessibility. Its frequent callbacks to the institutionalized, capitalist, Western cis-heteropatriarchy exemplify related denseness, though it still initiates a multidimensional and multilayered conversation regarding sex, gender, race, and class.

*Ending the Pursuit* is a comprehensive exploration of asexual, aromantic, and agender identities in history and society.

ALLISON JANICKI



### Body Phobia The Western Roots of Our Fear of Difference

Dianna E. Anderson, Broadleaf Books  
(SEP 24) Hardcover \$24.99 (158pp)  
978-1-5064-9643-6

Dianna E. Anderson's *Body Phobia* is a convincing personal and philosophical exposé of how a culture that fears bodily differences harms vulnerable people.

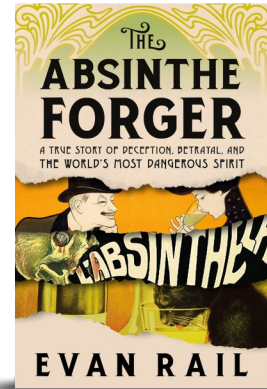
Anderson, who is nonbinary, trans, and queer, grew up in an evangelical community. The Christian mind-body dualism, they assert, promulgates the belief that "our flesh simply does not matter" or is inferior to the spiritual realm, a belief that discounts how size, disability, race, and gender affect people's everyday lives.

Several categories of difference are considered in turn, and Anderson has personal experience with most. They were fat-shamed by doctors who ignored their sleep apnea. Their eldest brother, who has Down syndrome, was lucky not to have been born in a previous decade. Gender dysphoria was a long-term source of anxiety for them. But care is also taken to make this an intersectional study: Anderson takes into account the treatment of Black bodies and how people are devalued when equated with their economic labor.

Anderson emphasizes the term "bodyminds" to reflect the indivisibility of the physical and the human consciousness that inhabits it. The text's argument extends to the fear of aging and death. When their mother died with dementia and amyloidosis in 2014, Anderson avoided looking at her dead body and recoiled from her coldness. Other cultures offer better models for relating to the dead, they suggest, from Judaism's sitting shiva to an Indigenous Indonesian practice of keeping a corpse at home until the funeral.

*Weaving together history, current events, and personal stories, the theological inquiry Body Phobia confronts unhelpful doctrines to issue a beautiful affirmation: "Your body is you, it is yours, it will change, and it will die. And all of that is okay."*

REBECCA FOSTER



### The Absinthe Forger A True Story of Deception, Betrayal, and the World's Most Dangerous Spirit

Evan Rail, Melville House (OCT 15)  
Hardcover \$32 (368pp), 978-1-68589-154-1

*Evan Rail follows the trail of a clever and creative fraudster in The Absinthe Forger, an engrossing true crime story.*

The word "absinthe" alone is enough to conjure images of tortured artists, fin de siècle decadence, and vacant-eyed addicts driven to despicable crimes. Since the drink was banned in France in 1915, absinthe lovers have been enthusiastic about tracking down unopened bottles from the pre-ban glory days. This presented a unique opportunity for one enterprising man to defraud and upend the small yet spirited absinthe underground.

In the exciting first chapter, Rail puts himself in the shoes of the forger: Christian, a mysterious figure who skitters along the edges of the rest of the book, visible only through the recollections of the many absinthe enthusiasts he cheated—and who ultimately came to suspect and unmask him as a confidence man. Rail also explores the cultural and legal history of absinthe, the rumors and myths that still surround it, and how contemporary connoisseurs rediscovered and revived the intricate rituals surrounding its consumption, creating a passionate, close-knit community of "absintheurs." But, as Rail discovered, the betrayal of someone who was both a high-profile expert and a friend has had a tragic cooling effect on that community. Now wary and much less willing to take chances on rare purchases, they are nonetheless generous about sharing their memories and museum-worthy collections with Rail. Guided by their stories and his own investigations, Rail comes ever closer to the elusive Christian, uncovering the hows and whys of his devastating operation.

In the end, as it has ever been, absinthe is not about how it is made but what the drinker makes of it. *The Absinthe Forger* is the bracing true story of a much-maligned spirit and the counterfeiter who turned its mythic status to his own ends.

EILEEN GONZALEZ ♥