

The Bookworm presents Shelf Awareness for Readers for Friday, June 12, 2020

From: The Bookworm Omaha (bookwormomaha@shelf-awareness.com)

To: [REDACTED]

Date: Friday, June 12, 2020, 09:39 AM CDT

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Instant  
*New York Times*  
Bestseller

LADY  
IN  
WAITING  
  
MY EXTRAORDINARY  
LIFE IN THE SHADOW  
OF THE CROWN

“Riveting...Anne’s stiff  
upper lip never quivers.”  
—Oprah Magazine



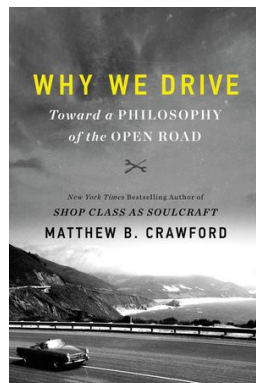
Friday, June 12, 2020

## From the Shelf

### Road Trips Become Read Trips

Since my car has been getting three months to the gallon for most of 2020, road trips have become read trips. I'm not alone. Even the legendary 24 Hours of Le Mans race (think the *Ford v Ferrari* movie) will be run this weekend as an e-sports event, with each team featuring a mix of professional racers and gamers.

In *Why We Drive: Toward a Philosophy of the Open Road* (Morrow), Matthew B. Crawford writes that "the road has a dicey quality to it. We usually have a destination in mind, but when we get behind the wheel we



### CHET IS BACK ON THE CASE!

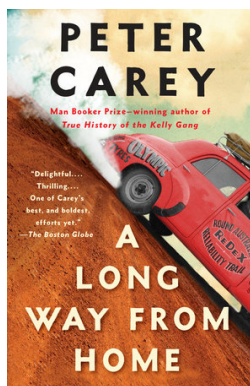
Get ready for an all-new mystery featuring bestselling duo Chet & Bernie

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07.07.20

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AN ARC!



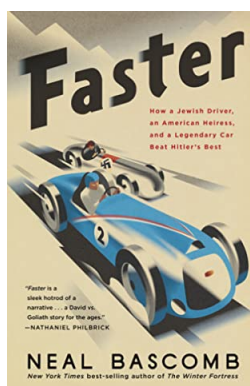
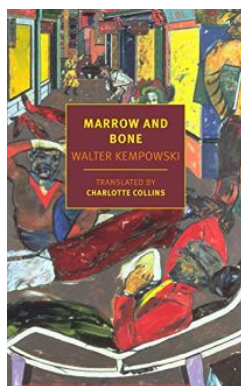
expose ourselves to unexpected hazards, as well as unlooked for moments of discovery."



Peter Carey's road trip is intensely multilayered in *A Long Way from Home* (Vintage International). During the 1950s, Willie Bachuber, a man devoted to maps, takes part in the Redex Trial, a 10,000-mile car race through

the unforgiving Australian outback. There he is confronted with equally unforgiving revelations about his personal and cultural history that no map could chart.

A West German journalist is hired by a luxury car company to travel through the Polish People's Republic in the late 1980s in *Marrow and Bone* by Walter Kempowski, translated by Charlotte Collins (NYRB Classics). Then it gets complicated: "All they were really meant to be doing was test-driving the new V8s; what did that have to do with Hitler's bunker?"



In the prologue to *Faster: How a Jewish Driver, an American Heiress, and a Legendary Car Beat Hitler's Best* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt), Neal Bascomb writes: "The tale of René Dreyfus, his odd little Delahaye

race car, and their champion Lucy Schell was one of the stories that Hitler would have liked struck from the books. This is its telling."

Crawford observes: "When you are leaned into a blind curve on a two-lane country road on a motorcycle, it becomes very clear that the road is a place of



What you really need to know about the history of the last 70,000 years.

Jared Diamond, author of *Guns, Germs, and Steel*



A brilliant book ... essential reading.

Martin Wolf,  
Chief Economics Commentator,  
Financial Times

## In this issue...

### Book Candy

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*Symbolism: Intentional or Not?*

### Great Reads

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*Rediscover: Bruce Jay Friedman*

### The Writer's Life

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*Reading with... Reverend Dr. William J. Barber II*

## Reviews

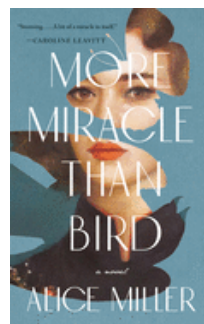
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★ *A Burning*  
by Megha Majumdar

A misunderstood social media post by a young woman in India propels this intense drama about political dysfunction, Bollywood ambitions and the perils of unchecked nationalistic fervor.

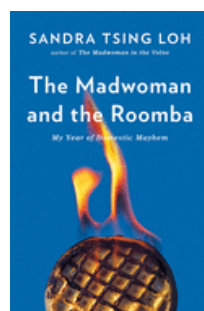
[Read this review >>](#)



★ *More Miracle than Bird*  
by Alice Miller

This historic, literary coming-of-age novel tackles the question of what a true love story really is with sensitivity, intelligence and precision.

[Read this review >>](#)



★ *The Madwoman and the Roomba: My Year of Domestic Mayhem*  
by Sandra Tsing Loh

Continuing to chronicle her life with self-deprecating humor and pithy insight, Sandra Tsing Loh falls wholeheartedly into her mid-50s.

[Read this review >>](#)

*Reviews by subject:*

Fiction · Mystery & Thriller · Biography & Memoir ·  
Current Events & Issues · Political Science ·  
Psychology & Self-Help · Humor · Children's &  
Young Adult





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## Book Candy

### Symbolism: Intentional or Not?

*Mental Floss* highlighted "famous novelists on symbolism in their work--and whether it was intentional."

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Quirk Books checked out some "hotel nightmares in movies and books."

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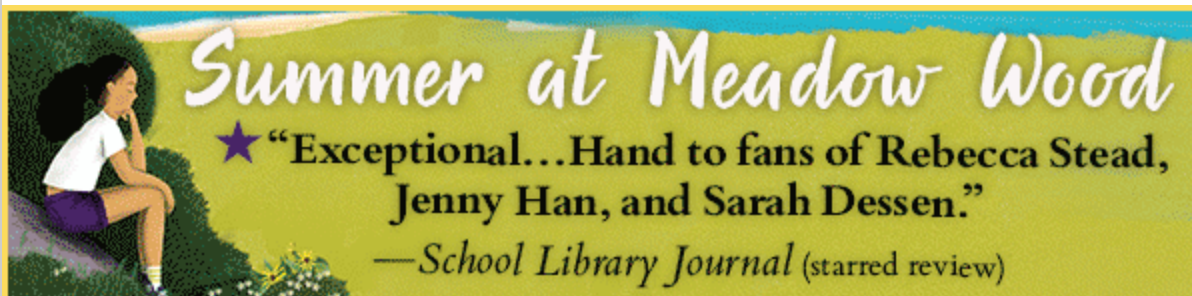
Merriam-Webster looked up "6 obscure words for messes."

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Plans have been approved for the U.K.'s first museum celebrating Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the BBC reported.

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"Even librarians, we consummate book-lovers, have books we just can't finish," the New York Public Library noted.



**Summer at Meadow Wood**

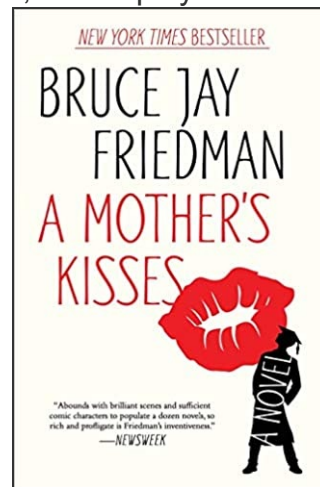
★ "Exceptional...Hand to fans of Rebecca Stead, Jenny Han, and Sarah Dessen."

—*School Library Journal* (starred review)

## Great Reads

Rediscover: Bruce Jay Friedman

Bruce Jay Friedman, who wrote darkly humorous novels, screenplays and scripts exploring the fears and insecurities of the white middle-class, died last week at age 90. Born and raised in the Bronx, N.Y., Friedman published his first book, *Stern*, in 1962. His sophomore novel, *A Mother's Kisses*, about an overbearing Jewish mother taking her son to college, became a bestseller in 1964. His first play, *Scuba Duba*, premiered in 1967 and was an Off-Broadway hit. In the early 1970s Friedman wrote *Steambath*, another popular play that was televised in 1973. He published the novels *The Dick*, about an urban detective, and *About Harry Towns*, featuring a screenwriter addicted to cocaine and, in the latter half of the decade, he wrote *The Lonely Guy's Book of Life*, which began as a series of essays and was later adapted for film. Friedman also wrote short stories, and his story "A Change of Plan" became the film *The Heartbreak Kid*.



From the 1980s on, Friedman focused on movies, writing the screenplay for *Stir Crazy*, which starred Gene Wilder and Richard Pryor and was directed by Sidney Poitier, and the first draft of the script for *Splash*, a romantic comedy about an affair between a man and a mermaid that starred Tom Hanks and Daryl Hannah. Friedman is considered an early writer of modern American black humor, alongside his friend Joseph Heller and colleagues Stanley Elkin and Thomas Pynchon. Friedman's most recent book is *Lucky Bruce: A Literary Memoir* (2011). *A Mother's Kisses* was last published in 2015 by Open Road Media (\$19.99).

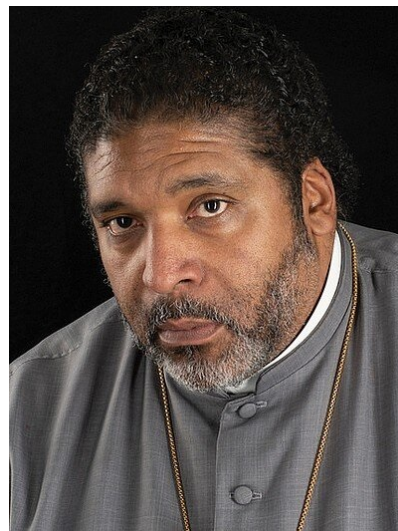


## The Writer's Life

Reading with... Reverend Dr. William J. Barber II

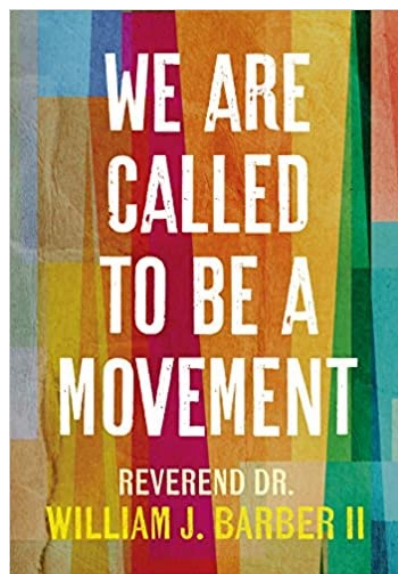
*The Reverend Dr. William J. Barber II is the author of We Are Called to Be a Movement (Workman, June 9, 2020), a powerful and poetic sermon demanding an end to poverty in the wealthiest nation in the world. Picking up the unfinished work of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Barber serves as president of Repairers of the Breach and co-chair of the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for*

*Moral Revival, uniting poor communities across the country to affect policies and elections at every level of government, and build lasting power for the 140 million poor and low-income people in the United States. On June 20, 2020, The campaign's virtual [Poor People's National Assembly and Moral March](#), with more than 100 organizations, Al Gore, Jane Fonda, Wanda Sykes and others, will focus on the lack of police accountability, voter suppression, poverty and the voices of the poor.*



### **On your nightstand now:**

I'm on the road for nine months, crisscrossing the nation to connect with poor and low-wealth people who are building the Poor People's Campaign together. I keep my Bible on the bed stand, and I keep reading the prophets--especially Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah and Jesus--alongside a couple of reports on the crisis of poverty: *Healing Our Divided Society*, edited by Fred Harris and Alan Curtis, and *The Souls of Poor Folks*, edited by Saurav Sarkar and Shailly Gupta-Barnes.



### **Favorite book when you were a child:**

My father used to ask me to read from Clarence Jordan's *Cotton Patch Gospels* in church before he preached. I loved the way Jordan, a Greek scholar, translated the Bible's ancient stories into a context and a language that was familiar to me. I also loved James Weldon Johnson's *God's Trombones*, which trained my ear to believe that words make worlds.

### **Your top five authors:**

Wow, that's hard. On economics, I always read Joseph Stiglitz, who won the Nobel Prize in Economics. His *The Cost of Inequality* is essential reading. On history, I've got several favorites: John Hope Franklin's *From Slavery to Freedom*, Kevin Kruse's *One Nation Under God*, Nancy MacLean's *Democracy in Chains* and Ibram Kendi's *Stamped from the Beginning*. In theological and biblical studies, I come back again and again to Howard Thurman, Ched Myers and Renita Weems. But there are so many good ones.

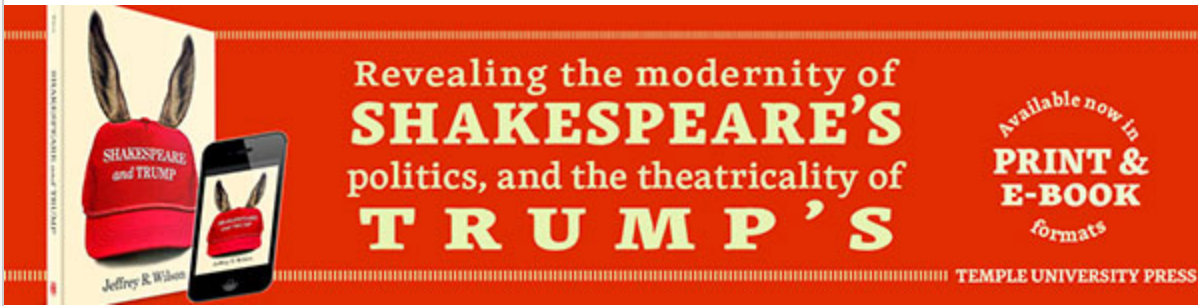
### **Book you're an evangelist for:**

Liz Theoharis, my co-chair of the Poor People's Campaign, has a brilliant book called *Always with Us?* And Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, who is a scribe for our movement, has a book called *Revolution of Values* that lifts up the moral narrative we think is needed to revive the heart of democracy. A couple of other new books I'm encouraging people to read...:

[Read more >>](#)







## Book Reviews

### Fiction

★ *A Burning*  
by Megha Majumdar



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Set in contemporary West Bengal, *A Burning* by Megha Majumdar confronts India's unsettling lurch toward extreme nationalism, a movement that threatens to destabilize the world's most populous democracy. A young Muslim woman is blamed for a terrorist attack, not by virtue of compelling evidence but because of her questionable loyalty to the motherland.

That woman is Jivan. She lives with her parents in a slum near a railway station. Her troubles begin one terrible night when, after a train filled with passengers is set on fire, witnesses claim to have seen her fleeing the scene of the crime. Already a suspect, Jivan writes a provocative Facebook post designed to generate "likes," which triggers her arrest. So begins an investigation tainted by breathtaking levels of corruption on the part of police and politicians looking to bolster their popularity.

Majumdar's impressive debut features intricately layered subplots expanding on themes of class, religious tension and discrimination toward India's transgender community. Jivan's neighbor is a transgender actress named Lovely who is on the cusp of hard-earned stardom. She is a hijra, officially recognized in many parts of the Indian sub-continent as a third gender. As the case against Jivan builds, Lovely must determine how much she is willing to sacrifice to help her.

*A Burning* moves at a suspenseful pace with the same powerful drive toward a conclusion as Kamila Shamsie's *Homefire*. Majumdar is a phenomenal new voice posing a daring question: Can Indian society as it exists today ever be impartial? -- [Shahina Piyarali](#), writer and reviewer

**Discover:** A misunderstood social media post by a young woman in India propels this intense drama about political dysfunction, Bollywood ambitions and the perils of unchecked nationalistic fervor.

Knopf, \$25.95 hardcover, 304p., 9780525658696

★ *More Miracle than Bird*  
by Alice Miller



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Alice Miller's debut novel, *More Miracle than Bird*, is a sweeping historical drama that provides a nuanced twist on the literary love story. At 21, Georgie Hyde-Lees meets W.B. Yeats, an already established poet twice her age. Soon after, Georgie receives an invitation to join the Order, a secret society dedicated to the academic study of the occult. While by day Georgie works as a nurse in a hospital for wounded World War I soldiers, by night she attends robed meetings, scours ancient tomes and exchanges fervent letters with Yeats, whom she believes she could marry. But as the war drags on and Yeats's imperfections surface, Georgie must take a closer look at what it would mean to be the wife of a famous man.

*More Miracle than Bird* stands out as a pristine, thoughtful re-imagining of the personal lives of true literary greats. With prose that delivers both cinematic images and keen insights, the novel unfolds in a calm and clear-eyed fashion that evokes its intelligent, no-nonsense protagonist. Rather than painting Georgie and Yeats as idealized romantic leads, Miller handles her characters with honesty and humanity, dexterously navigating the complexities of their flaws. Even the mystical elements of Georgie's story--her study of the occult, her visits to a medium--illustrate the human impulses at the center of the unknown. Ultimately, Georgie's journey is an exploration of how she, like many others, deceives herself simply because "she wanted something bigger than this small, pitiful man, who insisted on making her listen to him." --[Alice Martin](#), freelance writer and editor

**Discover:** This historic, literary coming-of-age novel tackles the question of what a true love story really is with sensitivity, intelligence and precision.

Tin House Books, \$25.95 hardcover, 368p., 9781947793767

*Always the Last to Know*



by Kristan Higgins



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Kristan Higgins (*Life and Other Inconveniences*; *Anything for You*) does a wonderful job encapsulating the messy, mostly loving, complicatedness of family life in *Always the Last to Know*. Sadie Frost has a pretty good life. She's an art teacher in New York City, she has a boyfriend she thinks she wants to marry and she's fairly happy.

Obviously, her life isn't as good as that of her elder sister, Juliet, who is a successful architect with a handsome British husband and two perfect daughters. Juliet has always been the favorite of Barb, their get-things-done mother, while Sadie is much happier being the beloved child of her low-key father, John.

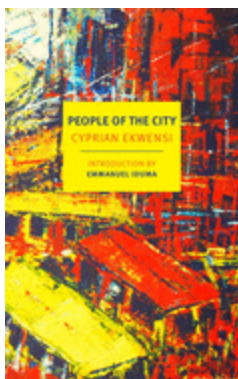
John and Barb have muddled along for 50 years, both bored in their marriage, and each blatantly favoring one of their two daughters, but it's all working well enough--until John has a stroke. Then Barb discovers John was having an affair. Sadie is furious that she has to move home to Connecticut to help care for John when Barb and Juliet won't. Meanwhile, the apparently perfect Juliet is having panic attacks in her closet.

The three Frost women are dynamic characters, and as they each face challenges in their personal and work lives, Higgins explores the knotty nature of modern womanhood. Lighthearted but nuanced, *Always the Last to Know* is an enjoyable read that is sure to appeal to fans of Susan Mallery or Elin Hilderbrand. --[Jessica Howard](#), bookseller at Bookmans, Tucson, Ariz.

**Discover:** In this messy family story, a woman and her grown daughters face drastic changes in their lives after her husband of 50 years has a stroke.

Berkley, \$26 hardcover, 400p., 9780593199855

## *People of the City* by Cyprian Ekwensi



Introduced in the U.K. in 1954, Ekwensi's debut novel, *People of the City*, arrives on U.S. shelves in a handsome new edition. Despite the book's age, the perennial everyman narrative proves equally affecting for contemporary audiences: Ekwensi's (anti-)hero distances himself from his provincial background ambitiously to pursue the rewards of a quickly changing urban life.

Amusa Sango is "a most colourful and eligible young bachelor" who lives, works, plays--and too easily loves--in a "famous West African city (which shall be nameless)" not

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unlike Lagos. Although he diligently works two jobs, as a crime reporter for a city paper and a dance-band leader at a club, he is rarely solvent. As an only son, what little he earns must also be shared with his widowed mother. While chasing stories of violent deaths and seeking opportunities to make music, Sango's careless choices in companionship do not serve him well. One friend's dangerous shenanigans first get Sango evicted from his modest lodgings, and later cause a detrimental impact to his journalism career. He's long been engaged to a naïve fiancée sequestered in a rural convent, who remains unaware of his reckless affairs. True love eventually catches him off-guard, but a happy ending is hardly guaranteed.

In an introduction both personally revealing and contextually enlightening, Nigerian author, editor and art critic Emmanuel Iduma (*A Stranger's Pose*) restores Ekwensi's historical literary prominence and underscores Ekwensi's crucial legacy as a progenitor to "any Nigerian writer who has tried to write about Lagos as a city with feeling," including Sefi Atta, Teju Cole and Chris Abani. -- Terry Hong, [Smithsonian BookDragon](#)

**Discover:** Prolific, historically significant Nigerian author Cyprian Ekwensi's debut novel, part of the African canon, appears in a handsome, new U.S. edition.

New York Review Books, \$15.95 paperback, 176p., 9781681374291

## Mystery & Thriller

*Safe*  
by S.K. Barnett



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Twelve years after six-year-old Jennifer Kristal disappeared while walking down a New York suburban street to her friend's house, a young woman shows up in town claiming to be Jenny. She's questioned by local police and the FBI, and shares horrifying details of the abuse she suffered from her kidnappers. Eventually they seem satisfied she is who she says she is, especially when Jenny's grateful parents arrive to bring her home. The title of S.K. Barnett's riveting *Safe* implies Jenny's ordeal is now over, but don't be fooled. Her first night home, Jenny's older brother makes it clear he doesn't believe the young woman is his long-lost sister. Then she receives an anonymous online warning: *Be careful*.

Is she a cruel manipulator or sympathetic victim? Does she intend to cause harm or is she in danger?



What follows is an exploration of the ravages of grief on families of missing children and the devastating effects of child trauma and abuse, wrapped up as an insidious thriller that twists in surprising directions. Barnett (a pseudonym) layers mystery upon mystery, keeping the central puzzle hidden while tantalizingly meting out clues. Readers who think they can unravel the knots will remain constantly challenged, and at some point, it's best to stop trying to get ahead of the story and enjoy remaining in the dark until the final revelations. --[Elyse Dinh-McCrillis](#), blogger at [Pop Culture Nerd](#)

**Discover:** A young woman claims she's the girl who disappeared 12 years earlier from a New York suburb in this gripping thriller.

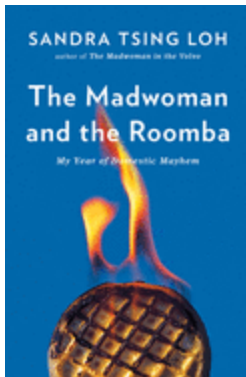
Dutton, \$26 hardcover, 336p., 9781524746520

## Biography & Memoir



### *The Madwoman and the Roomba: My Year of Domestic Mayhem*

by Sandra Tsing Loh



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Despite the "golden years" promised by many, for writer, performer and University of California, Irvine, professor Sandra Tsing Loh, her "fifty-fifth year was more like living a disorganized twenty-five-year-old's life in a malfunctioning eighty-five-year-old's body." With the same self-deprecating wit and sardonic charm with which she tackled mixed-race identity in *Aliens in America*; suburban malaise in *A Year in Van Nuys*; parenthood in *Mother on Fire*; and menopause in *The Madwoman in the Volvo*, Loh enters middle age--nursing a rotting tooth, fighting baby mice infesting her 1906 wooden craftsman house in Pasadena, wearing purple pants her girlfriends find hideous. Nevertheless, she makes her loyal audiences laugh (and maybe cry) right along with her.

At 56, Loh is the divorced mother of tween Sally and teen Hannah. Her 97-year-old Chinese immigrant father, known as "the crazy man of Malibu" for exercising naked on the beach, among other eccentric activities, has a grunge rock song named in his honor. Her Scotch Irish live-in partner, Charlie, is an underemployed theater producer and a Sanskrit-chanting, (seriously) practicing Hindu, with avid devotion to New Orleans's Mardi Gras. All are crucial characters during her "simple year in midlife" as Loh contemplates becoming a "silvery goddess," (sorta) sleeps with Arianna Huffington, owes the IRS \$34,000, takes her



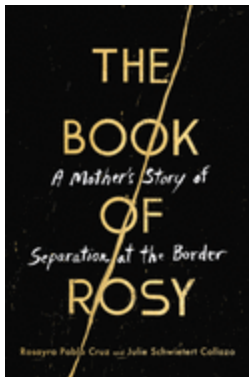
tween to Tampa to meet a suicidal never-seen e-buddy, fights prediabetes with In-N-Out Double-Doubles, fantasizes about living alone and notices tipsy four-year-olds at her father's memorial. Her madwoman antics will undoubtedly entertain, but her raw, unblinking reveals about being a mother, partner, sister, friend and daughter in her sixth decade are what will continue to resonate long after that final funny page. --Terry Hong, [Smithsonian BookDragon](#)

**Discover:** Continuing to chronicle her life with self-deprecating humor and pithy insight, Sandra Tsing Loh falls wholeheartedly into her mid-50s.

W.W. Norton, \$25.95 hardcover, 304p., 9780393249200

## Current Events & Issues

### *The Book of Rosy: A Mother's Story of Separation at the Border* by Rosayra Pablo Cruz and Julie Schwieter Collazo



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"In Guatemala, almost everyone has lost someone they love to murder," writes Rosayra Pablo Cruz in *The Book of Rosy*, a heartrending memoir of her harrowing journey through Mexico and into the United States. "We are a nation whose ghosts hover in the air around us, a country of walking dead."

Rosy first immigrated to the U.S. in 2014, but threats to her family in Guatemala necessitated a return. In 2018, Rosy risked a second border crossing, this time accompanied by her sons, 15-year-old Yordy and five-year-old Fernando. Daughters Britny and Dulce remained in Guatemala. "Among the many things that people don't understand about migration is this: No one *wants* to leave the people they love." Unaware of the Trump administration's newly enacted and harshly enforced "zero tolerance" policy, Rosy was sent to Eloy Detention Center in Arizona with bond set at \$12,000. Yordy and Fernando were taken from her and placed with a foster mother thousands of miles away in the Bronx, N.Y.

Rosy's poignant writing of the struggles facing Guatemalans and her firsthand experience of being in a "literal and psychological prison" are bookended by the powerful advocacy efforts of another mother, Julie Schwieter Collazo. A former social worker, Collazo was horrified to learn of the separations at the border. After contacting a New York City attorney and mobilizing a volunteer network of friends and strangers, Collazo

launched a campaign, Immigrant Families Together, to raise thousands of dollars to free several mothers at Eloy Detention Center--including Rosy.

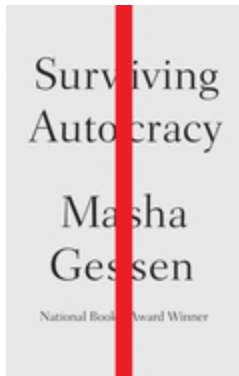
Ultimately inspiring and hopeful, *The Book of Rosy* offers an intimately detailed and personal account of two mothers' determination and strength. --[Melissa Firman](#), writer, editor and blogger at [melissafirman.com](#)

**Discover:** This timely, insightful memoir documents an immigrant mother's separation from her children and how the advocacy of strangers gave them the chance for a new life.

HarperOne, \$26.99 hardcover, 256p., 9780062941923

## Political Science

### *Surviving Autocracy* by Masha Gessen



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*New Yorker* staff writer Masha Gessen (*The Future Is History*) knows something about autocrats. The Moscow-born Gessen has observed the political machinations in her former homeland as well as the political career of Donald Trump. The result is *Surviving Autocracy*, a blistering appraisal of a man whose presidency "has been not one but a series of actions that change the nature of American government and politics step by step," and that has left profound damage, even chaos, in its wake.

Gessen explains how Trump's has been the first presidential administration "focused on destruction." Whether it was "waging a war of militant incompetence against expertise" or appointing cabinet secretaries like Scott Pruitt, whose lifelong goal was to undermine the mission of the agencies they headed, "Trump's project is a government of the worst: a kakistocracy." That is, government by the least suitable leaders.

But as Gessen meticulously documents, Trump's most determined, and most frightening, campaign has been his war on the notion of objective truth, and upon the institutions that unearth and report it. Gessen's book is relatively short on any political remedies for Trumpism. What's most critical, she argues, is a reinvigorated journalism. As the U.S. approaches another presidential election, one that will be shadowed by an uncertain recovery from a global pandemic, the manifest flaws in Trump's character and the danger his continued governance poses have been laid bare thanks to Gessen

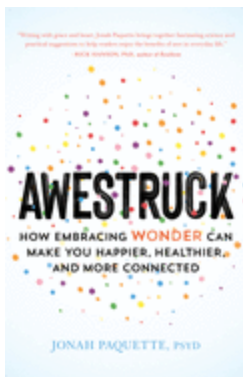
and other fearless journalists. *Surviving Autocracy* isn't merely important reading for anyone who plans to cast a vote in that election, it's essential. --[Harvey Freedenberg](#), freelance reviewer

**Discover:** A noted journalist presents a trenchant analysis of the damage the Trump presidency has inflicted on American democracy.

Riverhead, \$26 hardcover, 288p., 9780593188934

## Psychology & Self-Help

*Awestruck: How Embracing Wonder Can Make You Happier, Healthier, and More Connected*  
by [Jonah Paquette](#)



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"Awe," writes clinical psychologist Jonah Paquette in the introduction to *Awestruck*, "is the rare sort of experience that can truly transform our lives." But not so rare as to be impossible to encounter and embrace in everyday life, which, Paquette goes on to argue, can make people "less stressed, healthier, happier, and more connected to those around us."

Anything that promises such incredible gains can easily sound too good to be true, but Paquette is thorough in backing up his claims. He first offers an overview of how awe has appeared throughout religious, philosophical and academic texts, then details how the experience of awe affects the human brain and body. This settled, the second half of *Awestruck* moves on to providing concrete and actionable ways readers can increase the amount of awe they experience on a near-daily basis. Many of these tips are inherently tied to experiencing nature, and many more draw on the same themes of mindfulness and observance that so many self-help books on similar subjects encourage.

While the methods in *Awestruck* may not be particularly groundbreaking or unusual, they combine with Paquette's scientific context to remind readers that experiencing awe is not an "extravagant luxury," to be enjoyed only occasionally and only by those who can afford over-the-top experiences. Instead, awe is "an essential part of a life well lived," and easy to come by, if one makes the time for it. --[Kerry McHugh](#), blogger at [Entomology of a Bookworm](#)

**Discover:** A clinical psychologist makes the case for why--and how--experiencing awe can improve nearly every



aspect of daily life.

Shambhala, \$16.95 paperback, 192p., 9781611807745

## Humor

### *Dot Con: The Art of Scamming the Scammer* by James Veitch



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Virtually everyone with an e-mail address has received spam "get rich quick" offers, but British comedian and TED speaker James Veitch's solution was to engage the spammers with hilarious ongoing responses. *Dot Con* reproduces those laugh-out-loud back-and-forth e-mails that sometimes continued for weeks. "I figure any time they're spending with me is time in which they're not scamming vulnerable adults out of their savings," writes Veitch.

Veitch's imaginative and droll e-mailed replies are subtle sucker punches that often seem to fly over the heads of the scammers. One e-mailer asks, "Have I got your attention?" three times in one short e-mail. Veitch's brief first reply is: "Sorry, can you repeat that? I wasn't paying attention." Most of the scams begin with people either finding money or needing to move money to another country and they're willing to share millions with Veitch if he acts as a middle man. Of course, they need his banking information and passwords and eventually he will be asked to pay several thousands of dollars in document processing fees. Another scammer pretends to be a friend who needs money wired to him. Veitch stalls, insisting the friend writes him a blurb for his upcoming novel the scammer supposedly read. "Just 30 words about the main plot twist and the bit with the robots and the milkmaid," Veitch requests. Several e-mails later, the blurb arrives.

Fans of Don Novello's *The Lazlo Letters* or Ted L. Nancy's *Letters from a Nut* will find an outrageous and wry new outlet for hilarity in James Veitch's *Dot Con*. --Kevin Howell, independent reviewer and marketing consultant

**Discover:** A British comedian exacts revenge on e-mail scammers by answering them with replies that are frustrating to the con artists and wildly hilarious to readers.

Hachette Books, \$17 hardcover, 208p., 9780306874598

# Children's & Young Adult

## *Jo & Laurie*

by Margaret Stohl and Melissa de la Cruz



MORE INFO

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This clever, satisfying and well-researched retelling of the 150-year-old novel *Little Women* reimagines the relationship between literary, nontraditional second sister Jo March and the charming and wealthy boy next door, Laurie. *Jo & Laurie* should bring sweet peace to the legions of fans who have despaired over Louisa May Alcott's authorial decisions regarding the love lives of the March girls in the original novel.

In the spinoff, Jo herself--not Alcott--is struggling to produce a sequel to her surprise smash "collection of domestic moments." (The original novel was published in two parts.) Money, family and relationship concerns alternately drive and paralyze the 18-year-old "authoress," who feels pressure from her editor and fans to prettily wrap things up for the (barely) fictional sisters. Everyone must be married off, they say, but Jo resists even as she grapples with her own feelings about love.

Authors Margaret Stohl (*Icons*; the Beautiful Creatures series) and Melissa de la Cruz (*The Queen's Assassin*; Alex & Eliza trilogy) masterfully blend historical language and familiar *Little Women* details into Jo's hilarious and poignant attempts at rewrites, ultimately creating a parallel world where things might have gone a little differently for the March family. Readers with a contemporary feminist bent will appreciate Jo's fury at the occasional dismissive, trivializing attitudes toward women that several of the characters exhibit, as when her editor reminds her that readers "want their little whalebone-corseted hearts set afire." Traditionalists may balk, but romantics will swoon at the conclusion of the highly entertaining *Jo & Laurie*. -- [Emilie Coulter](#), freelance writer and editor

**Discover:** A romantic and amusing reimagining of *Little Women* sure to delight the generations of readers who longed for a different ending to the relationship between Jo March and her boy-next-door, Laurie.

Putnam, \$18.99 hardcover, 384p., ages 12-up, 9781984812018

*Camp*  
by L.C. Rosen



MORE INFO

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L.C. Rosen (*Jack of Hearts (and other parts)*) successfully captures the fleeting feelings of first love and explores identity in his sophomore YA novel, set at a queer summer camp.

Every summer since 16-year-old Randall came out four years ago, he's attended Camp Outland, "a four-week sleepaway summer camp for LGBTQIA+ teens." Randy and his best friends George and Ashleigh always sign up for the camp musical, but this summer Randy's exchanged his purple wheely bag with cat stickers for a big military surplus bag, cut short his chin-length, wavy hair and requested everyone call him Del. This transformation is all part of "the plan" to make the camp playboy, Hudson, fall in love with him. Hudson is known for serial-dating only guys like himself--"masc" fantasies--but Del is going to be the boy who finally gets Hudson to commit. Del's friends express concern over his choices, but he brushes them off with, "Once we're in love, I'll gradually turn back into Randy."

Whether it's a camp providing a "who-cares-if-your-wrists-are-loose freedom" or a summer show "unrestrained by gender or sexuality," *Camp* unashamedly celebrates queerness through Del and his friends' representations of a variety of sexual identities. Rosen explores these identities without ever making them feel like stereotypes or ignoring prejudices in the community, such as how there's always one kid who argues that "being ace and aro isn't queer." This broad inclusion feels organic and is the perfect backdrop for Del's self-discovery. --[Lana Barnes](#), freelance reviewer and proofreader

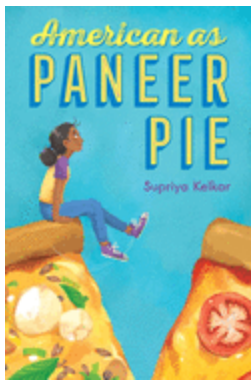
**Discover:** A summer camp for queer teens serves as a backdrop for love, heartbreak and self-acceptance in this hilarious and thoughtful romance.

Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, \$17.99 hardcover, 384p., ages 14-up, 9780316537759

### *American as Paneer Pie* by Supriya Kelkar

Justice warriors like Malala are often born with their fighting spirits; much harder is turning a highly embarrassable 11-year-old into an activist. A galvanizing transformation can be found in Supriya Kelkar's middle-grade novel *American as Paneer Pie*. It's narrated by sixth grader Lekha Divekar, an Indian American girl who's trying to be a "good Desi kid" at home while blending in at her nearly all-white school.





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For Lekha, whose parents emigrated from Mumbai and are raising her outside Detroit, attending middle school means regularly fielding belittling questions: "Why do you guys have dots on your forehead?," "Why does your food smell so funny?" and so on. When Avantika, a Desi girl Lekha's age, moves into the neighborhood, Lekha is euphoric: now she won't be the only one who knows "what it's like to have two lives, your Indian life at home and your American life at school." But Avantika intends to live *one* life, and she talks back, her Indian accent undisguised, to the school's premier bully. Lekha starts to wonder: Could it be that keeping her mouth shut isn't necessarily the best way to get by?

*American as Paneer Pie* has some cardboard villains, but the novel succeeds valiantly at exposing the conflicted loyalties felt by many children of immigrants. While Kelkar (*Ahimsa*; *The Many Colors of Harpreet Singh*) is generous with details of Desi culture, readers won't lose sight of the fact that Lekha is a typical, sympathetic tween determined "to be normal, like everyone else." --[Nell Beram](#), freelance writer and YA author

**Discover:** This middle-grade novel about an Indian American girl who gets teased at her almost all-white school is an activist primer for those temperamentally disinclined to speak up.

Aladdin, \$17.99 hardcover, 320p., ages 8-12, 9781534439382

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