

Best of 2020-2021: Nonfiction Books

written by Entropy | December 9, 2021



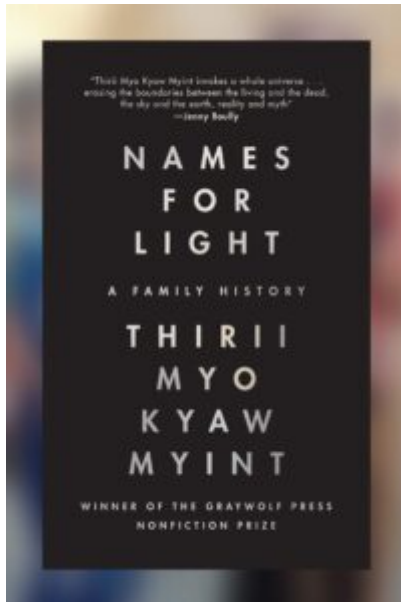
Continuing with our series of “[Best of 2020-2021](#)” lists curated by the entire *Entropy* community, we present some of our favorite selections as nominated by the diverse staff and team here at *Entropy*, as well as thousands of nominations from our readers. The lists this year are especially meaningful as they mark the final time we’ll be doing them, and some of the last content that will be going up on the website. (Read [the farewell post](#) from our founder here.)

This list brings together some of our favorite nonfiction books published in 2020 and 2021.

([For last year’s list, click here.](#))

In no particular order...

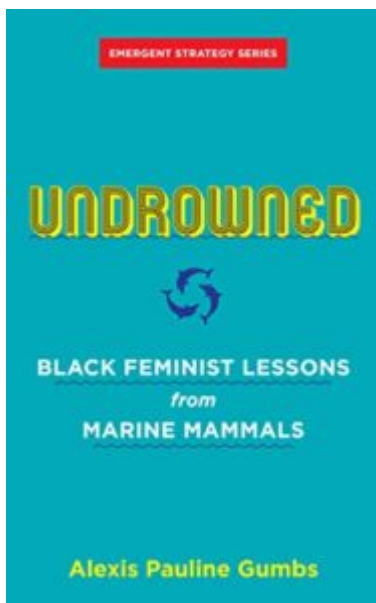
1. *Names For Light: A Family History* by Thirii Myo Kyaw Myint (Graywolf Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Names for Light traverses time and memory to weigh three generations of a family's history against a painful inheritance of postcolonial violence and racism. In spare, lyric paragraphs framed by white space, Thirii Myo Kyaw Myint explores home, belonging, and identity by revisiting the cities in which her parents and grandparents lived. As she makes inquiries into their stories, she intertwines oral narratives with the official and mythic histories of Myanmar. But while her family's stories move into the present, her own story—that of a writer seeking to understand who she is—moves into the past, until both converge at the end of the book.

2. *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals* by Alexis Pauline Gumbs (AK Press, 2020)

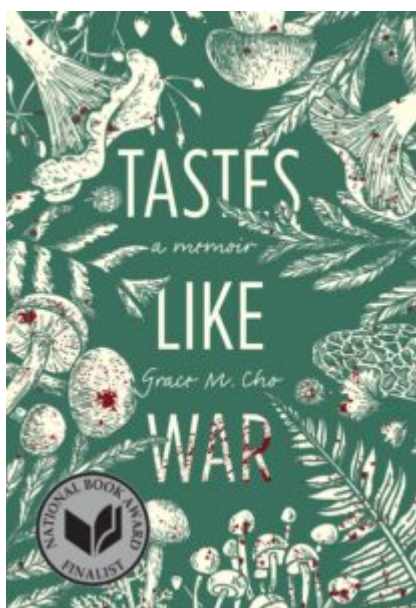


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Undrowned is a book-length meditation for social movements and our whole species based on the subversive and transformative guidance of marine mammals. Our aquatic cousins are queer, fierce, protective of each other,

complex, shaped by conflict, and struggling to survive the extractive and militarized conditions our species has imposed on the ocean. Gumbs employs a brilliant mix of poetic sensibility and naturalist observation to show what they might teach us, producing not a specific agenda but an unfolding space for wondering and questioning. From the relationship between the endangered North Atlantic Right Whale and Gumbs's Shinnecock and enslaved ancestors to the ways echolocation changes our understandings of "vision" and visionary action, this is a masterful use of metaphor and natural models in the service of social justice.

3. *Tastes Like War* by Grace M. Cho (Feminist Press, 2021)



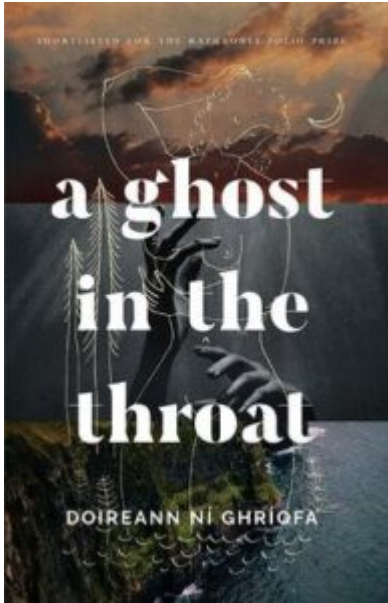
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Grace M. Cho grew up as the daughter of a white American merchant marine and the Korean bar hostess he met abroad. They were one of few immigrants in a xenophobic small town during the Cold War, where identity was politicized by everyday details—language, cultural references, memories, and food. When Grace was fifteen, her dynamic mother experienced the onset of schizophrenia, a condition that would continue and evolve for the rest of her life.

Part food memoir, part sociological investigation, *Tastes Like War* is a hybrid text about a daughter's search through intimate and global history for the roots of her mother's schizophrenia. In her mother's final years, Grace learned to cook dishes from her parent's childhood in order to invite the past into the present, and to hold space for her mother's multiple voices at the table. And through careful listening over these shared meals, Grace discovered not only the things that broke the brilliant, complicated woman who raised her—but also the things that kept her alive.

4. *A Ghost in the Throat* by Doireann Ní Ghríofa (Biblioasis,

2021)

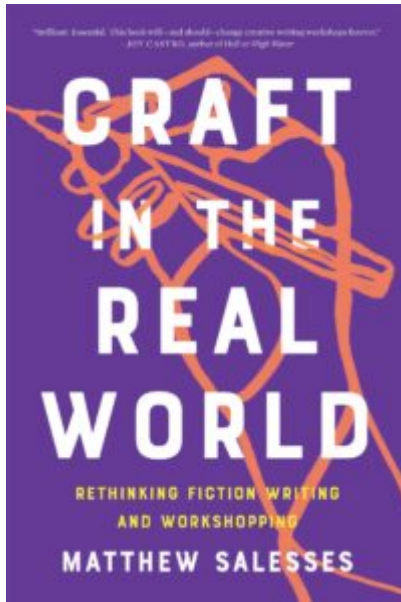


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

On discovering her murdered husband's body, an eighteenth-century Irish noblewoman drinks handfuls of his blood and composes an extraordinary lament. Eibhlín Dubh Ní Chonaill's poem travels through the centuries, finding its way to a new mother who has narrowly avoided her own fatal tragedy. When she realizes that the literature dedicated to the poem reduces Eibhlín Dubh's life to flimsy sketches, she wants more: the details of the poet's girlhood and old age; her unique rages, joys, sorrows, and desires; the shape of her days and site of her final place of rest. What follows is an adventure in which Doireann Ní Ghriófa sets out to discover Eibhlín Dubh's erased life—and in doing so, discovers her own.

Moving fluidly between past and present, quest and elegy, poetry and those who make it, *A Ghost in the Throat* is a shapeshifting book: a record of literary obsession; a narrative about the erasure of a people, of a language, of women; a meditation on motherhood and on translation; and an unforgettable story about finding your voice by freeing another's.

5. *Craft in the Real World* by Matthew Salesses (Catapult, 2021)

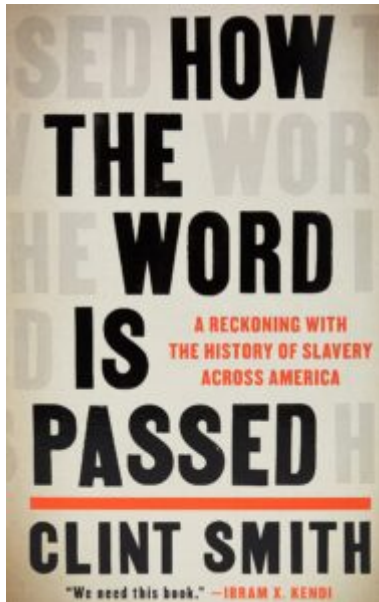


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

The traditional writing workshop was established with white male writers in mind; what we call craft is informed by their cultural values. In this bold and original examination of elements of writing—including plot, character, conflict, structure, and believability—and aspects of workshop—including the silenced writer and the imagined reader—Matthew Salesses asks questions to invigorate these familiar concepts. He upends Western notions of how a story must progress. How can we rethink craft, and the teaching of it, to better reach writers with diverse backgrounds? How can we invite diverse storytelling traditions into literary spaces?

Drawing from examples including *One Thousand and One Nights*, *Curious George*, Ursula K. Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea*, and the Asian American classic *No-No Boy*, Salesses asks us to reimagine craft and the workshop. In the pages of exercises included here, teachers will find suggestions for building syllabi, grading, and introducing new methods to the classroom; students will find revision and editing guidance, as well as a new lens for reading their work. Salesses shows that we need to interrogate the lack of diversity at the core of published fiction: how we teach and write it. After all, as he reminds us, "When we write fiction, we write the world."

6. *How the Word is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America* by Clint Smith (Little, Brown and Company, 2021)

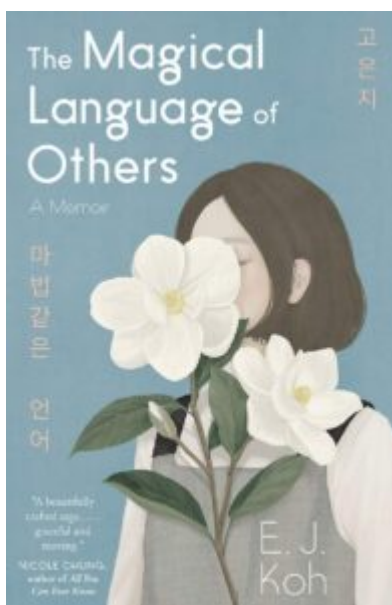


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

A deeply researched and transporting exploration of the legacy of slavery and its imprint on centuries of American history, *How the Word Is Passed* illustrates how some of our country's most essential stories are hidden in plain view—whether in places we might drive by on our way to work, holidays such as Juneteenth, or entire neighborhoods like downtown Manhattan, where the brutal history of the trade in enslaved men, women, and children has been deeply imprinted.

Informed by scholarship and brought to life by the story of people living today, Smith's debut work of nonfiction is a landmark of reflection and insight that offers a new understanding of the hopeful role that memory and history can play in making sense of our country and how it has come to be.

7. *The Magical Language of Others* by E.J. Koh (Tin House, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

The Magical Language of Others is a powerful and aching love story in

letters, from mother to daughter. After living in America for over a decade, Eun Ji Koh's parents return to South Korea for work, leaving fifteen-year-old Eun Ji and her brother behind in California. Overnight, Eun Ji finds herself abandoned and adrift in a world made strange by her mother's absence. Her mother writes letters in Korean over the years seeking forgiveness and love—letters Eun Ji cannot fully understand until she finds them years later hidden in a box.

As Eun Ji translates the letters, she looks to history—her grandmother Jun's years as a lovesick wife in Daejeon, the loss and destruction her grandmother Kumiko witnessed during the Jeju Island Massacre—and to poetry, as well as her own lived experience to answer questions inside all of us. Where do the stories of our mothers and grandmothers end and ours begin? How do we find words—in Korean, Japanese, English, or any language—to articulate the profound ways that distance can shape love?

The Magical Language of Others weaves a profound tale of hard-won selfhood and our deep bonds to family, place, and language, introducing—in Eun Ji Koh—a singular, incandescent voice.

8. *A Little Devil in America: Notes in Praise of Black Performance* by Hanif Abdurraqib (Random House, 2021)



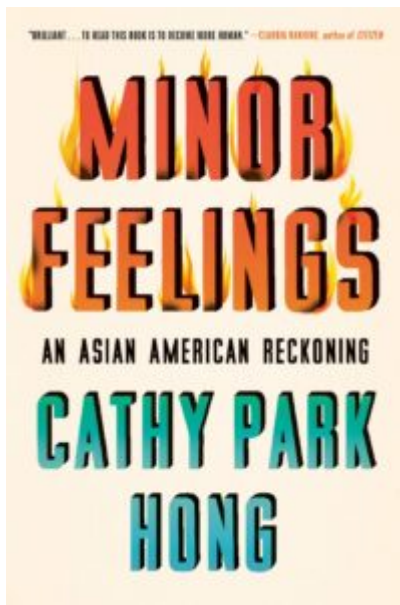
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

At the March on Washington in 1963, Josephine Baker was fifty-seven years old, well beyond her most prolific days. But in her speech she was in a mood to consider her life, her legacy, her departure from the country she was now triumphantly returning to. “I was a devil in other countries, and I was a little devil in America, too,” she told the crowd. Inspired by these few words, Hanif Abdurraqib has written a profound and lasting reflection on how Black performance is inextricably woven into the fabric of American culture. Each moment in every performance he examines—whether it's the twenty-seven seconds in “Gimme Shelter” in which Merry Clayton wails the words “rape, murder,” a schoolyard fistfight, a dance marathon, or the instant in a game

of spades right after the cards are dealt—has layers of resonance in Black and white cultures, the politics of American empire, and Abdurraqib’s own personal history of love, grief, and performance.

Abdurraqib writes prose brimming with jubilation and pain, infused with the lyricism and rhythm of the musicians he loves. With care and generosity, he explains the poignancy of performances big and small, each one feeling intensely familiar and vital, both timeless and desperately urgent. Filled with sharp insight, humor, and heart, *A Little Devil in America* exalts the Black performance that unfolds in specific moments in time and space—from midcentury Paris to the moon, and back down again to a cramped living room in Columbus, Ohio.

9. *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning* by Cathy Park Hong (One World, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Poet and essayist Cathy Park Hong fearlessly and provocatively blends memoir, cultural criticism, and history to expose fresh truths about racialized consciousness in America. Part memoir and part cultural criticism, this collection is vulnerable, humorous, and provocative—and its relentless and riveting pursuit of vital questions around family and friendship, art and politics, identity and individuality, will change the way you think about our world.

Binding these essays together is Hong’s theory of “minor feelings.” As the daughter of Korean immigrants, Cathy Park Hong grew up steeped in shame, suspicion, and melancholy. She would later understand that these “minor feelings” occur when American optimism contradicts your own reality—when you believe the lies you’re told about your own racial identity. Minor feelings are not small, they’re dissonant—and in their tension Hong finds the key to the questions that haunt her.

With sly humor and a poet’s searching mind, Hong uses her own story as a

portal into a deeper examination of racial consciousness in America today. This intimate and devastating book traces her relationship to the English language, to shame and depression, to poetry and female friendship. A radically honest work of art, *Minor Feelings* forms a portrait of one Asian American psyche—and of a writer’s search to both uncover and speak the truth.

10. *Groundswell* by Yanara Friedland (Essay Press, 2021)

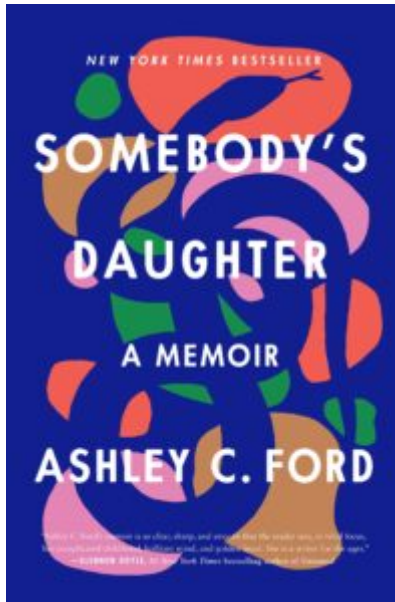


Groundswell Yanara Friedland

[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

GROUNDSWELL is a collection of border narratives, rituals, and biographies of Grenzgaenger. Inside the narrator’s dream to return home, we encounter the living archive of walls and ruins. Along Germany’s former east-west division or the southwest borderlands of the US and Mexico, the ground begins to swarm with stories. The multivocal text, composed from oral histories and memories, presents voices at the crossroads who weave a map between teller and listener, site and onlooker, the dead and the living as well as the walking body and earth itself.

11. *Somebody’s Daughter* by Ashley C. Ford (Flatiron Books, 2021)

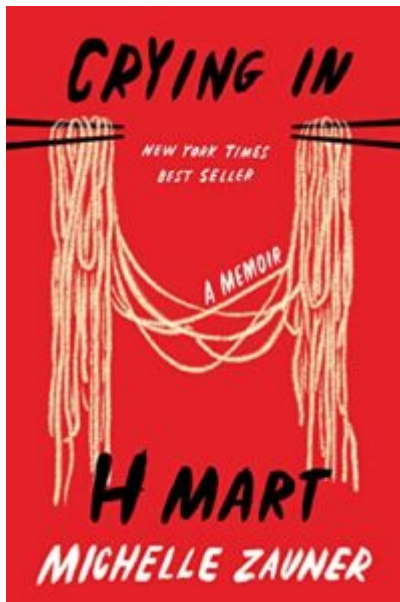


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Through poverty, adolescence, and a fraught relationship with her mother, Ashley C. Ford wishes she could turn to her father for hope and encouragement. There are just a few problems: he's in prison, and she doesn't know what he did to end up there. She doesn't know how to deal with the incessant worries that keep her up at night, or how to handle the changes in her body that draw unwanted attention from men. In her search for unconditional love, Ashley begins dating a boy her mother hates. When the relationship turns sour, he assaults her. Still reeling from the rape, which she keeps secret from her family, Ashley desperately searches for meaning in the chaos. Then, her grandmother reveals the truth about her father's incarceration . . . and Ashley's entire world is turned upside down.

Somebody's Daughter steps into the world of growing up a poor Black girl in Indiana with a family fragmented by incarceration, exploring how isolating and complex such a childhood can be. As Ashley battles her body and her environment, she embarks on a powerful journey to find the threads between who she is and what she was born into, and the complicated familial love that often binds them.

12. *Crying in H Mart* by Michelle Zauner (Knopf, 2021)



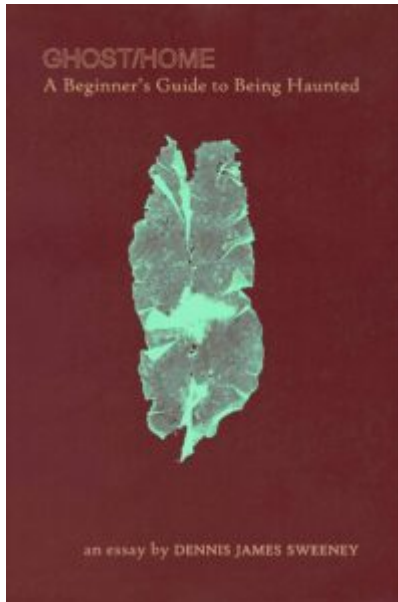
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

In this exquisite story of family, food, grief, and endurance, Michelle Zauner proves herself far more than a dazzling singer, songwriter, and guitarist. With humor and heart, she tells of growing up one of the few Asian American kids at her school in Eugene, Oregon; of struggling with her mother's particular, high expectations of her; of a painful adolescence; of treasured months spent in her grandmother's tiny apartment in Seoul, where she and her mother would bond, late at night, over heaping plates of food.

As she grew up, moving to the East Coast for college, finding work in the restaurant industry, and performing gigs with her fledgling band—and meeting the man who would become her husband—her Koreanness began to feel ever more distant, even as she found the life she wanted to live. It was her mother's diagnosis of terminal cancer, when Michelle was twenty-five, that forced a reckoning with her identity and brought her to reclaim the gifts of taste, language, and history her mother had given her.

Vivacious and plainspoken, lyrical and honest, Zauner's voice is as radiantly alive on the page as it is onstage. Rich with intimate anecdotes that will resonate widely, and complete with family photos, *Crying in H Mart* is a book to cherish, share, and reread.

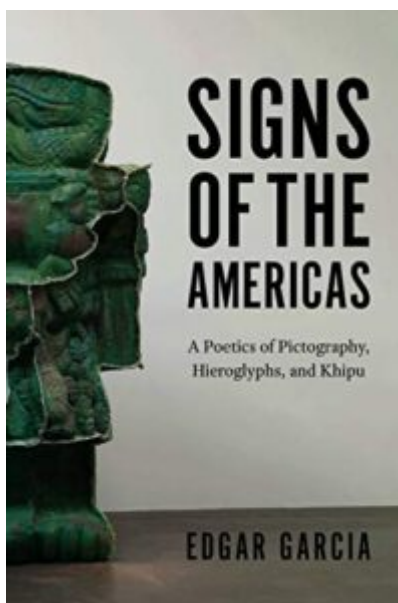
13. *Ghost/Home: A Beginner's Guide to Being Haunted* by Dennis James Sweeney (Ricochet Editions, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Ghost/Home traces the course of a disease through a body, a ghost through a home, and a feeling through the language that tries to hold it. How does illness travel through us? What do we do with the parts of ourselves we feel but cannot grasp? Where are the ghosts in our lives, and what are their names? In diagrams of ghosts, readings of Clarice Lispector, photographs, interviews, and lyric prose, *Ghost/Home* extends these questions into uncharted territory. Like its cover—an early Anna Atkins cyanotype, which transforms an image of algae into a ghostly figure—*Ghost/Home* transforms the experience of living with Crohn's disease into an incalculable, invisible, but pervasive entity.

14. *Signs of the Americas: A Poetics of Pictography, Hieroglyphics, and Khipu* by Edgar Garcia (University of Chicago Press, 2020)



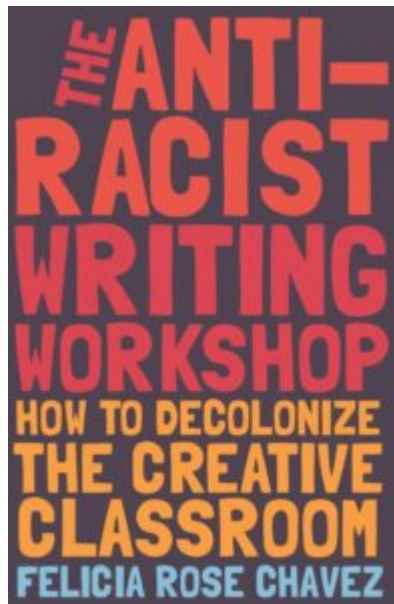
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Indigenous sign-systems, such as pictographs, petroglyphs, hieroglyphs, and

kipu, are usually understood as relics from an inaccessible past. That is far from the truth, however, as Edgar Garcia makes clear in *Signs of the Americas*. Rather than being dead languages, these sign-systems have always been living, evolving signifiers, responsive to their circumstances and able to continuously redefine themselves and the nature of the world.

Garcia tells the story of the present life of these sign-systems, examining the contemporary impact they have had on poetry, prose, visual art, legal philosophy, political activism, and environmental thinking. In doing so, he brings together a wide range of indigenous and non-indigenous authors and artists of the Americas, from Aztec priests and Amazonian shamans to Simon Ortiz, Gerald Vizenor, Jaime de Angulo, Charles Olson, Cy Twombly, Gloria Anzaldúa, William Burroughs, Louise Erdrich, Cecilia Vicuña, and many others. From these sources, Garcia depicts the culture of a modern, interconnected hemisphere, revealing that while these “signs of the Americas” have suffered expropriation, misuse, and mistranslation, they have also created their own systems of knowing and being. These indigenous systems help us to rethink categories of race, gender, nationalism, and history. Producing a new way of thinking about our interconnected hemisphere, this ambitious, energizing book redefines what constitutes a “world” in world literature.

15. *The Anti-Racist Writing Workshop: How to Decolonize the Creative Classroom* by Felicia Rose Chavez (Haymarket Books, 2021)



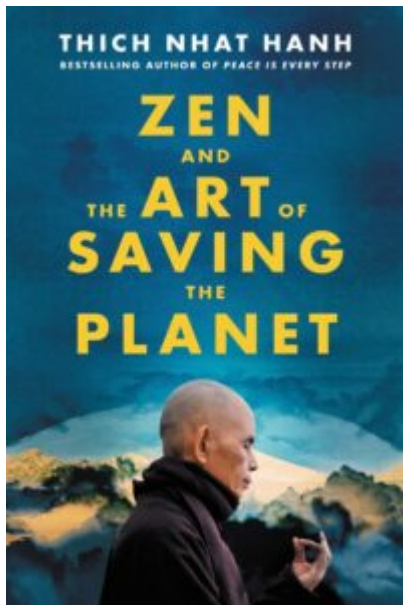
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

“With personal anecdotes and memories, with brilliant readings of spaces, classrooms, and texts, Felicia Rose Chavez communicates so much of what is truly at stake in the classroom: our voices, our histories, and our capacities to live ethically, curiously, and in true and deep connection with ourselves and others. This book is a gorgeous dismantling just as it is an urgent offering up of strategies and questions. My heart is so alive reading this.”

—Aracelis Girmay, author of *The Black Maria*

“How does one write but not necessarily learn voice?’ This is one of the most halting and necessary questions Felicia Rose Chavez poses in *The Anti-Racist Writing Workshop*. What Chavez presents from her experience as workshop participant, artist, activist, and professor is vital and generous.”
–Jennifer Baker, editor of *Everyday People*

16. *Zen and the Art of Saving the Planet* by Thich Nhat Hanh (HarperOne, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

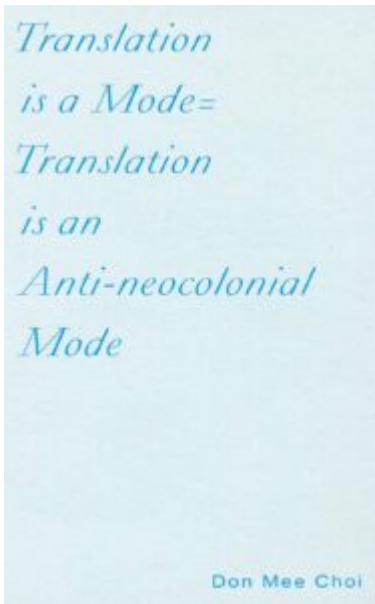
We face a potent intersection of crises: ecological destruction, rising inequality, racial injustice, and the lasting impacts of a devastating pandemic. The situation is beyond urgent. To face these challenges, we need to find ways to strengthen our clarity, compassion, and courage to act.

Beloved Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh is blazingly clear: there’s one thing we all have the power to change, which can make all the difference, and that is our mind. Our way of looking, seeing, and thinking determines every choice we make, the everyday actions we take or avoid, how we relate to those we love or oppose, and how we react in a crisis.

Mindfulness and the radical insights of Zen meditation can give us the strength and clarity we need to help create a regenerative world in which all life is respected. Filled with Thich Nhat Hanh’s inspiring meditations, Zen stories and experiences from his own activism, as well as commentary from Sister True Dedication, one of his students *Zen and the Art of Saving the Planet* shows us a new way of seeing and living that can bring healing and harmony to ourselves, our relationships, and the Earth.

17. *Translation is a Mode=Translation is an Anti-neocolonial Mode*

by Don Mee Choi (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

TRANSLATION IS A MODE=TRANSLATION IS AN ANTI-NEOCOLONIAL MODE explores translation and language in the context of US imperialism—through the eyes of a “foreigner;” a translator; a child in Timoka, the made-up city of Ingmar Bergman’s *The Silence*; a child from a neocolony.

18. *Say Translation Is Art* by Sawako Nakayasu (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

SAY TRANSLATION IS ART is a treatise on literary translation that exceeds the bounds of conventional definitions of such, advocating for a wider embrace of translation as both action and as art. In the ever-expansive margins of dominant literary culture, translation links up with performance, repetition, failure, process, collaboration, feminism, polyphony, conversation, deviance, punk, and improvisation.

19. *White Magic* by Elissa Washuta (Tin House, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Throughout her life, Elissa Washuta has been surrounded by cheap facsimiles of Native spiritual tools and occult trends, “starter witch kits” of sage, rose quartz, and tarot cards packaged together in paper and plastic. Following a decade of abuse, addiction, PTSD, and heavy-duty drug treatment for a misdiagnosis of bipolar disorder, she felt drawn to the real spirits and powers her dispossessed and discarded ancestors knew, while she undertook necessary work to find love and meaning.

In this collection of intertwined essays, she writes about land, heartbreak, and colonization, about life without the escape hatch of intoxication, and about how she became a powerful witch. She interlaces stories from her forebears with cultural artifacts from her own life—*Twin Peaks*, the *Oregon Trail II* video game, a Claymation Satan, a YouTube video of Stevie Nicks and Lindsey Buckingham—to explore questions of cultural inheritance and the particular danger, as a Native woman, of relaxing into romantic love under colonial rule.

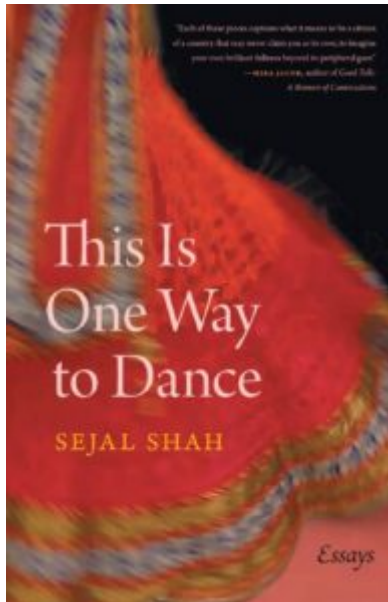
20. *A History of My Brief Body* by Billy-Ray Belcourt (Two Dollar Radio, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Billy-Ray Belcourt's debut memoir opens with a tender letter to his kokum and memories of his early life in the hamlet of Jousard, Alberta, and on the Driftpile First Nation. Piece by piece, Billy-Ray's writings invite us to unpack and explore the big and broken world he inhabits every day, in all its complexity and contradiction: a legacy of colonial violence and the joy that flourishes in spite of it; first loves and first loves lost; sexual exploration and intimacy; the act of writing as a survival instinct and a way to grieve. What emerges is not only a profound meditation on memory, gender, anger, shame, and ecstasy, but also the outline of a way forward. With startling honesty, and in a voice distinctly and assuredly his own, Belcourt situates his life experiences within a constellation of seminal queer texts, among which this book is sure to earn its place. Eye-opening, intensely emotional, and excessively quotable, *A History of My Brief Body* demonstrates over and over again the power of words to both devastate and console us.

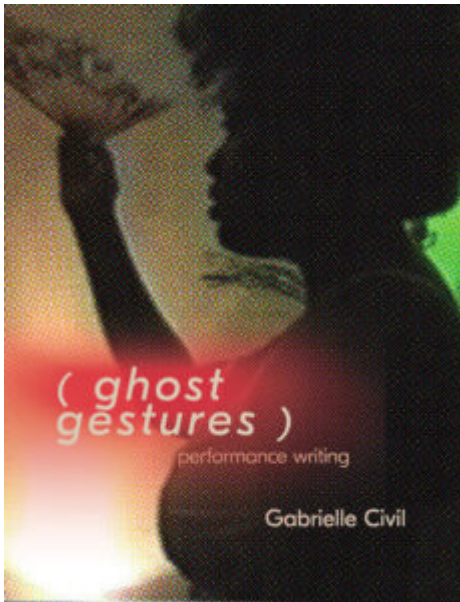
21. *This is One Way to Dance* by Sejal Shah (University of Georgia Press, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

In the linked essays that make up her debut collection, *This Is One Way to Dance*, Sejal Shah explores culture, language, family, and place. Throughout the collection, Shah reflects on what it means to make oneself visible and legible through writing in a country that struggles with race and maps her identity as an American, South Asian American, writer of color, and feminist. *This Is One Way to Dance* draws on Shah's ongoing interests in ethnicity and place: the geographic and cultural distances between people, both real and imagined. Her memoir in essays emerges as Shah wrestles with her experiences growing up and living in western New York, an area of stark racial and economic segregation, as the daughter of Gujarati immigrants from India and Kenya. These essays also trace her movement over twenty years from student to teacher and meditate on her travels and life in New England, New York City, and the Midwest, as she considers what it means to be of a place or from a place, to be foreign or familiar.

22. (*ghost gestures*) by Gabrielle Civil (Gold Line Press, 2021)



[Bookshop](#)

How can you return to where you've never been? (GHOST GESTURES) conjures diaspora hauntings and traces black bodies across space and time. In Dakar and Banjul, Detroit and Montreal, Tlaxcala and Río Piédras, Gabrielle Civil showcases black bodies dancing, hiding, and re-emerging. In performance writing, she invokes the doll, the queen, and the ghost to explore where black women have never and always been. She plays hide-and-seek with her own transforming body and tackles history, identity, art, and desire. "bring this here / bring this back / keep this here / bring us back / bring us here / bring us back to this." Incorporating chants, notations, images, and scores, (GHOST GESTURES) will spirit you away.

23. *Rancher* by Selah Saterstrom (Burrow Press, 2021)



essay
SELAH SATERSTROM

image
H.C. DUNAWAY SMITH

[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

To heal is to be changed, to be, potentially, revolutionized by the fracture whose initial presence signals as a wound. For all of its pain, the fracture sends out new lay lines – new paths of inquiry that necessitate new modes of

knowing and being-with. *Rancher* follows such paths into the uncanny territories of life after rape: What happens when a lie becomes the truth? What happens when the ghost haunting your house turns out to be you? Saterstrom considers these questions with the oracular input of saints behaving subversively, black widow spiders, and a host of ghosts and friends alike. *With original color illustrations by H.C. Dunaway Smith*

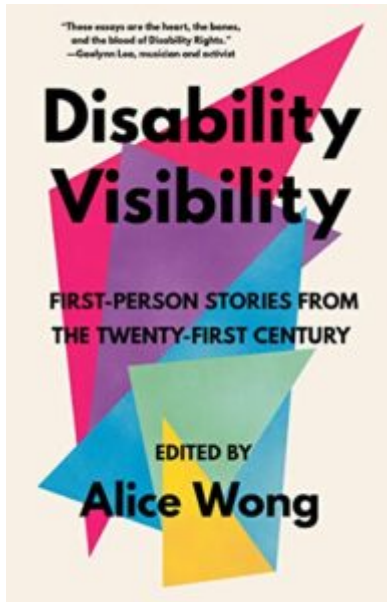
24. *Complaint!* by Sara Ahmed (Duke University Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

In *Complaint!* Sara Ahmed examines what we can learn about power from those who complain about abuses of power. Drawing on oral and written testimonies from academics and students who have made complaints about harassment, bullying, and unequal working conditions at universities, Ahmed explores the gap between what is supposed to happen when complaints are made and what actually happens. To make complaints within institutions is to learn how they work and for whom they work: complaint as feminist pedagogy. Ahmed explores how complaints are made behind closed doors and how doors are often closed on those who complain. To open these doors—to get complaints through, keep them going, or keep them alive—Ahmed emphasizes, requires forming new kinds of collectives. This book offers a systematic analysis of the methods used to stop complaints and a powerful and poetic meditation on what complaints can be used to do. Following a long lineage of Black feminist and feminist of color critiques of the university, Ahmed delivers a timely consideration of how institutional change becomes possible and why it is necessary.

25. *Disability Visibility: First-Person Stories from the Twenty-First Century* Edited by Alice Wong (Vintage, 2020)

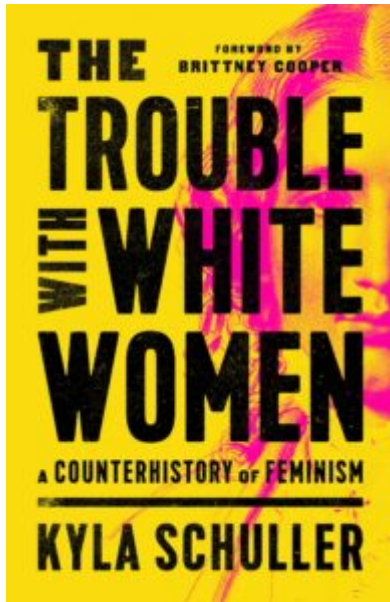


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

One in five people in the United States lives with a disability. Some disabilities are visible, others less apparent—but all are underrepresented in media and popular culture. Now, just in time for the thirtieth anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, activist Alice Wong brings together this urgent, galvanizing collection of contemporary essays by disabled people.

From Harriet McBryde Johnson's account of her debate with Peter Singer over her own personhood to original pieces by authors like Keah Brown and Haben Girma; from blog posts, manifestos, and eulogies to Congressional testimonies, and beyond: this anthology gives a glimpse into the rich complexity of the disabled experience, highlighting the passions, talents, and everyday lives of this community. It invites readers to question their own understandings. It celebrates and documents disability culture in the now. It looks to the future and the past with hope and love.

26. *The Trouble With White Women: A Counterhistory of Feminism* by Kyla Schuller (Bold Type Books, 2021)



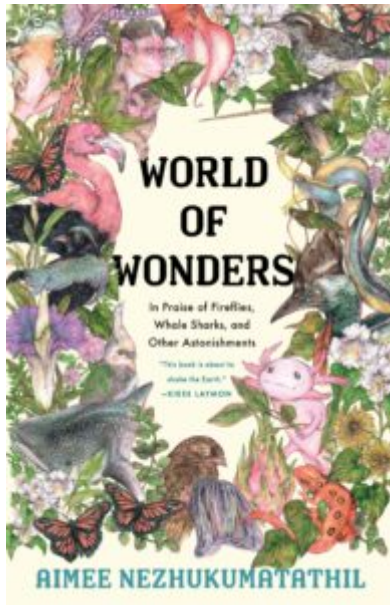
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Women including Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Margaret Sanger, and Sheryl Sandberg are commonly celebrated as leaders of feminism. Yet they have fought for the few, not the many. As award-winning scholar Kyla Schuller argues, their white feminist politics dispossess the most marginalized to liberate themselves.

In *The Trouble with White Women*, Schuller brings to life the two-hundred-year counter history of Black, Indigenous, Latina, poor, queer, and trans women pushing back against white feminists and uniting to dismantle systemic injustice. These feminist heroes such as Frances Harper, Harriet Jacobs, and Pauli Murray have created an anti-racist feminism for all. But we don't speak their names and we don't know their legacies. Unaware of these intersectional leaders, feminists have been led down the same dead-end alleys generation after generation, often working within the structures of racism, capitalism, homophobia, and transphobia rather than against them.

Building a more just feminist politics for today requires a reawakening, a return to the movement's genuine vanguards and visionaries. Their compelling stories, campaigns, and conflicts reveal the true potential of feminist liberation. *The Trouble with White Women* gives feminists today the tools to fight for the flourishing of all.

27. *World of Wonders: In Praise of Fireflies, Whale Sharks, and Other Astonishments* by Aimee Nezhukumatathil (Milkweed Editions, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

From beloved, award-winning poet Aimee Nezhukumatathil comes a debut work of nonfiction—a collection of essays about the natural world, and the way its inhabitants can teach, support, and inspire us.

As a child, Nezhukumatathil called many places home: the grounds of a Kansas mental institution, where her Filipina mother was a doctor; the open skies and tall mountains of Arizona, where she hiked with her Indian father; and the chillier climes of western New York and Ohio. But no matter where she was transplanted—no matter how awkward the fit or forbidding the landscape—she was able to turn to our world’s fierce and funny creatures for guidance.

“What the peacock can do,” she tells us, “is remind you of a home you will run away from and run back to all your life.” The axolotl teaches us to smile, even in the face of unkindness; the touch-me-not plant shows us how to shake off unwanted advances; the narwhal demonstrates how to survive in hostile environments. Even in the strange and the unlovely, Nezhukumatathil finds beauty and kinship. For it is this way with wonder: it requires that we are curious enough to look past the distractions in order to fully appreciate the world’s gifts.

Warm, lyrical, and gorgeously illustrated by Fumi Nakamura, *World of Wonders* is a book of sustenance and joy.

**28. *Just Us: An American Conversation* by Claudia Rankine
(Graywolf Press, 2020)**



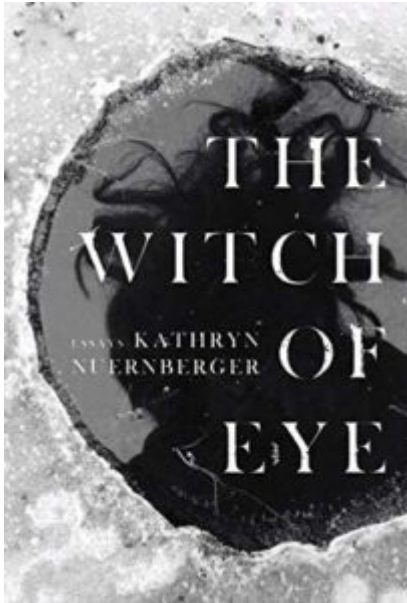
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

As everyday white supremacy becomes increasingly vocalized with no clear answers at hand, how best might we approach one another? Claudia Rankine, without telling us what to do, urges us to begin the discussions that might open pathways through this divisive and stuck moment in American history.

Just Us is an invitation to discover what it takes to stay in the room together, even and especially in breaching the silence, guilt, and violence that follow direct addresses of whiteness. Rankine's questions disrupt the false comfort of our culture's liminal and private spaces—the airport, the theater, the dinner party, the voting booth—where neutrality and politeness live on the surface of differing commitments, beliefs, and prejudices as our public and private lives intersect.

This brilliant arrangement of essays, poems, and images includes the voices and rebuttals of others: white men in first class responding to, and with, their white male privilege; a friend's explanation of her infuriating behavior at a play; and women confronting the political currency of dying their hair blond, all running alongside fact-checked notes and commentary that complements Rankine's own text, complicating notions of authority and who gets the last word

29. *The Witch of Eye* by Kathryn Nuernberger (Sarabande Books, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

This amazingly wise and nimble collection investigates the horrors inflicted on so-called “witches” of the past. *The Witch of Eye* unearths salves, potions, and spells meant to heal, yet interpreted by inquisitors as evidence of evil. The author describes torture and forced confessions alongside accounts of gentleness of legendary midwives. In one essay about a trial, we learn through folklore that Jesus’s mother was a midwife who cured her own son’s rheumatism. In other essays there are subtle parallels to contemporary discourse around abortion and environmental destruction. Nuernberger weaves in her own experiences, too. There’s an ironic look at her own wedding, an uncomfortable visit to the Prague Museum of Torture, and an afternoon spent tearing out a garden in a mercurial fit. Her researched material is eye-opening, lively, and often funny. An absolutely thrilling collection.

30. *The Betweens* by Cynthia Arrieu-King (Noemi Press, 2021)

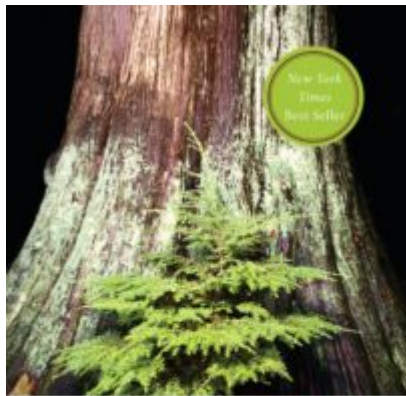


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

In *THE BETWEENS*, Arrieu-King builds an experimental memoir from prose blocks:

ones about microaggressions, scientific facts, as well as metaphors from art, history, and textile arts. In this book of lyric prose, those caught between two cultures can see their negotiation of the two accrete into something beyond a binary narrative. It also asks how one's point of view opens the world or limits us, and what to do with the suffering that we ultimately experience and cause.

31. *Find the Mother Tree: Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest* by Suzanne Simard (Knopf, 2021)



**FINDING THE
MOTHER TREE**
Discovering the
Wisdom of the Forest
SUZANNE SIMARD

[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Suzanne Simard is a pioneer on the frontier of plant communication and intelligence; she's been compared to Rachel Carson, hailed as a scientist who conveys complex, technical ideas in a way that is dazzling and profound. Her work has influenced filmmakers (the Tree of Souls of James Cameron's *Avatar*) and her TED talks have been viewed by more than 10 million people worldwide.

Now, in her first book, Simard brings us into her world, the intimate world of the trees, in which she brilliantly illuminates the fascinating and vital truths—that trees are not simply the source of timber or pulp, but are a complicated, interdependent circle of life; that forests are social, cooperative creatures connected through underground networks by which trees communicate their vitality and vulnerabilities with communal lives not that different from our own.

32. *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change Our Minds & Shape Our Futures* by Merlin Sheldrake (Random House, 2020)

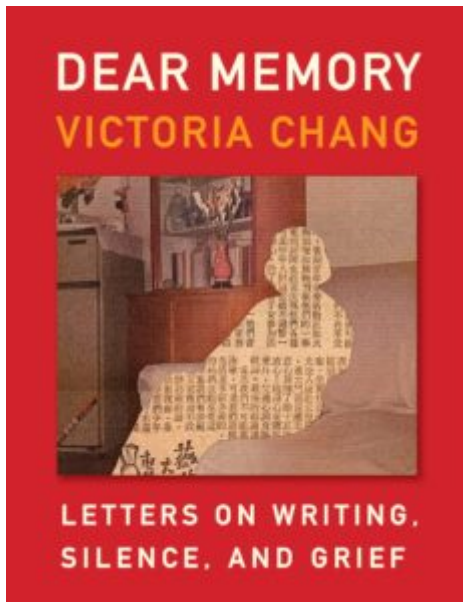


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

In *Entangled Life*, the brilliant young biologist Merlin Sheldrake shows us the world from a fungal point of view, providing an exhilarating change of perspective. Sheldrake's vivid exploration takes us from yeast to psychedelics, to the fungi that range for miles underground and are the largest organisms on the planet, to those that link plants together in complex networks known as the "Wood Wide Web," to those that infiltrate and manipulate insect bodies with devastating precision.

Fungi throw our concepts of individuality and even intelligence into question. They are metabolic masters, earth makers, and key players in most of life's processes. They can change our minds, heal our bodies, and even help us remediate environmental disaster. By examining fungi on their own terms, Sheldrake reveals how these extraordinary organisms—and our relationships with them—are changing our understanding of how life works.

33. *Dear Memory: Letters On Writing, Silence, and Grief* by Victoria Chang (Milkweed Editions, 2021)



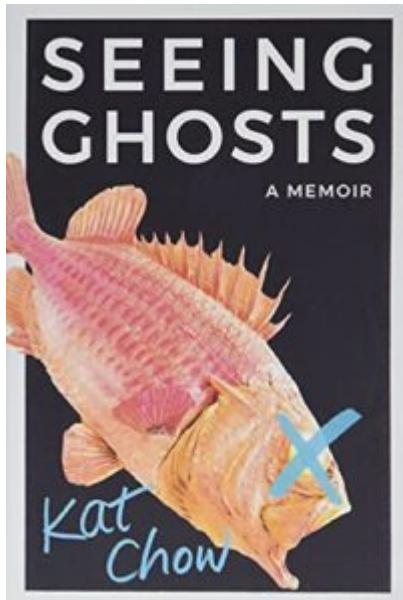
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

For poet Victoria Chang, memory “isn’t something that blooms, but something that bleeds internally.” It is willed, summoned, and dragged to the surface. The remembrances in this collection of letters are founded in the fragments of stories her mother shared reluctantly, and the silences of her father, who first would not and then could not share more. They are whittled and sculpted from an archive of family relics: a marriage license, a letter, a visa petition, a photograph. And, just as often, they are built on the questions that can no longer be answered.

Dear Memory is not a transcription but a process of simultaneously shaping and being shaped, knowing that when a writer dips their pen into history, what emerges is poetry. In carefully crafted missives on trauma and loss, on being American and Chinese, Victoria Chang shows how grief can ignite a longing to know yourself.

In letters to family, past teachers, and fellow poets, as the imagination, *Dear Memory* offers a model for what it looks like to find ourselves in our histories.

34. *Seeing Ghosts* by Kat Chow (Grand Central Publishing, 2021)

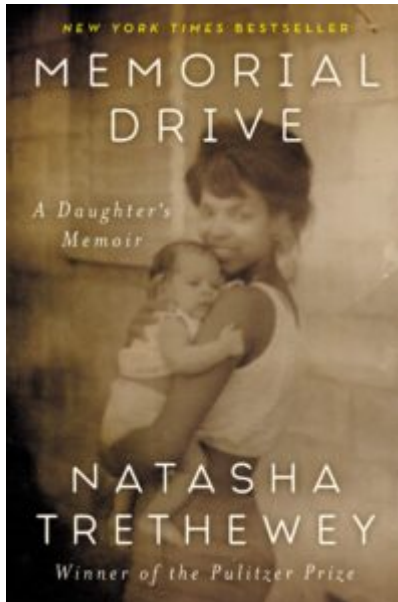


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Kat Chow has always been unusually fixated on death. She worried constantly about her parents dying—especially her mother. A vivacious and mischievous woman, Kat’s mother made a morbid joke that would haunt her for years to come: when she died, she’d like to be stuffed and displayed in Kat’s future apartment in order to always watch over her.

After her mother dies unexpectedly from cancer, Kat, her sisters, and their father are plunged into a debilitating, lonely grief. With a distinct voice that is wry and heartfelt, Kat weaves together a story of the fallout of grief that follows her extended family as they emigrate from China and Hong Kong to Cuba and America. *Seeing Ghosts* asks what it means to reclaim and tell your family’s story: Is writing an exorcism or is it its own form of preservation? The result is an extraordinary new contribution to the literature of the American family, and a provocative and transformative meditation on who we become facing loss.

35. *Memorial Drive: A Daughter’s Memoir* by Natasha Trethewey (Ecco, 2021)

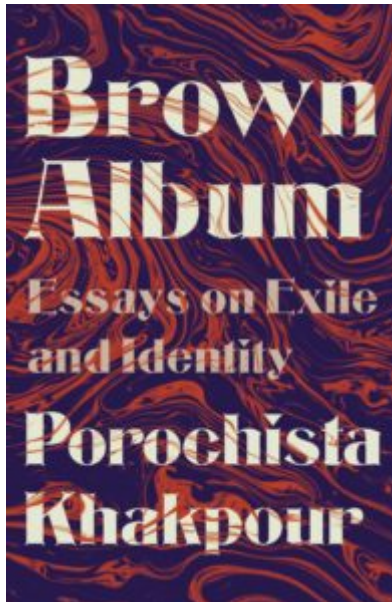


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

With penetrating insight and a searing voice that moves from the wrenching to the elegiac, Pulitzer Prize–winning poet Natasha Trethewey explores this profound experience of pain, loss, and grief as an entry point into understanding the tragic course of her mother’s life and the way her own life has been shaped by a legacy of fierce love and resilience. Moving through her mother’s history in the deeply segregated South and through her own girlhood as a “child of miscegenation” in Mississippi, Trethewey plumbs her sense of dislocation and displacement in the lead-up to the harrowing crime that took place on Memorial Drive in Atlanta in 1985.

Memorial Drive is a compelling and searching look at a shared human experience of sudden loss and absence but also a piercing glimpse at the enduring ripple effects of white racism and domestic abuse. Animated by unforgettable prose and inflected by a poet’s attention to language, this is a luminous, urgent, and visceral memoir from one of our most important contemporary writers and thinkers.

36. *Brown Album: Essays on Exile and Identity* by Porochista Khakpour (Vintage, 2020)

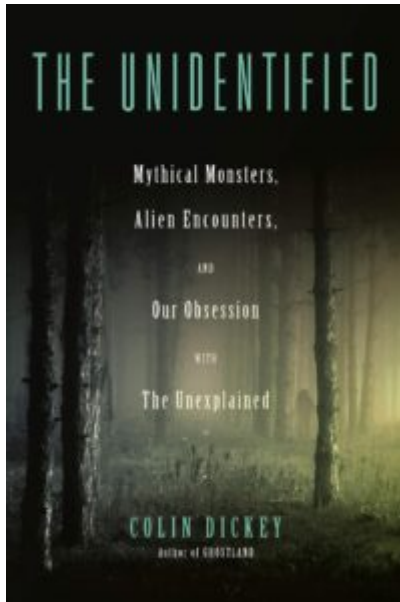


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Novelist Porochista Khakpour's family moved to Los Angeles after fleeing the Iranian Revolution, giving up their successes only to be greeted by an alienating culture. Growing up as an immigrant in America means that one has to make one's way through a confusing tangle of conflicting cultures and expectations. And Porochista is pulled between the glitzy culture of Tehrangeles, an enclave of wealthy Iranians and Persians in LA, her own family's modest life and culture, and becoming an assimilated American. Porochista rebels—she bleaches her hair and flees to the East Coast, where she finds her community: other people writing and thinking at the fringes. But, 9/11 happens and with horror, Porochista watches from her apartment window as the towers fall. Extremism and fear of the Middle East rises in the aftermath and then again with the election of Donald Trump. Porochista is forced to finally grapple with what it means to be Middle-Eastern and Iranian, an immigrant, and a refugee in our country today.

Brown Album is a stirring collection of essays, at times humorous and at times profound, drawn from more than a decade of Porochista's work and with new material included. Altogether, it reveals the tolls that immigrant life in this country can take on a person and the joys that life can give.

37. *The Unidentified: Mythical Monsters, Alien Encounters, and Our Obsession with the Unexplained* by Colin Dickey (Viking, 2020)

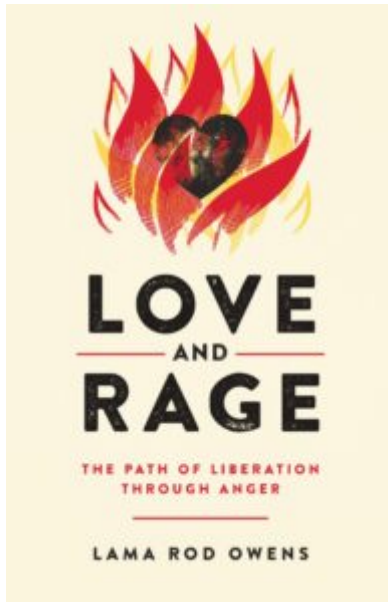


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

In a world where rational, scientific explanations are more available than ever, belief in the unprovable and irrational—in fringe—is on the rise: from Atlantis to aliens, from Flat Earth to the Loch Ness monster, the list goes on. It seems the more our maps of the known world get filled in, the more we crave mysterious locations full of strange creatures.

Enter Colin Dickey, Cultural Historian and Tour Guide of the Weird. With the same curiosity and insight that made *Ghostland* a hit with readers and critics, Colin looks at what all fringe beliefs have in common, explaining that today's Illuminati is yesterday's Flat Earth: the attempt to find meaning in a world stripped of wonder. Dickey visits the wacky sites of America's wildest fringe beliefs—from the famed Mount Shasta where the ancient race (or extra-terrestrials, or possibly both, depending on who you ask) called Lemurians are said to roam, to the museum containing the last remaining "evidence" of the great Kentucky Meat Shower—investigating how these theories come about, why they take hold, and why as Americans we keep inventing and re-inventing them decade after decade. *The Unidentified* is Colin Dickey at his best: curious, wry, brilliant in his analysis, yet eminently readable.

38. *Love and Rage: The Path of Liberation through Anger* by Lama Rod Owens (North Atlantic Books, 2020)

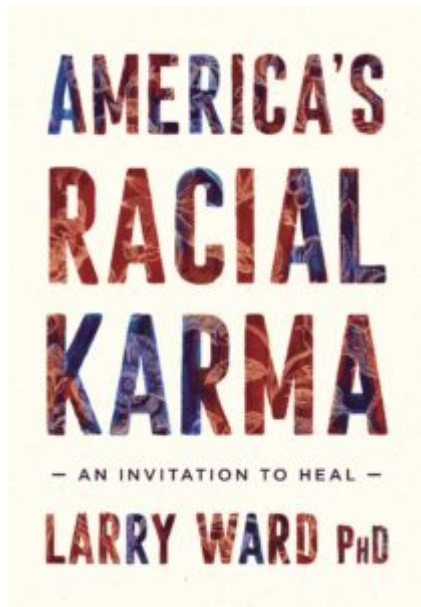


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

White supremacy in the United States has long necessitated that Black rage be suppressed, repressed, or denied, often as a means of survival, a literal matter of life and death. In *Love and Rage*, Lama Rod Owens, coauthor of *Radical Dharma*, shows how this unmetabolized anger—and the grief, hurt, and transhistorical trauma beneath it—needs to be explored, respected, and fully embodied to heal from heartbreak and walk the path of liberation. This is not a book about bypassing anger to focus on happiness, or a road map for using spirituality to transform the nature of rage into something else. Instead, it is one that offers a potent vision of anger that acknowledges and honors its power as a vehicle for radical social change and enduring spiritual transformation.

Love and Rage weaves the inimitable wisdom and lived experience of Lama Rod Owens with Buddhist philosophy, practical meditation exercises, mindfulness, *tantra*, *pranayama*, ancestor practices, energy work, and classical yoga. The result is a book that serves as both a balm and a blueprint for those seeking justice who can feel overwhelmed with anger—and yet who refuse to relent. It is a necessary text for these times.

39. *America's Racial Karma: An Invitation to Heal* by Larry Ward (Parallax Press, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

“I am a drop in the ocean, but I’m also the ocean. I’m a drop in America, but I’m also America. Every pain, every confusion, every good and every bad and ugly of America is in me. And as I transform myself and heal and take care of myself, I’m very conscious that I’m healing and transforming and taking care of America. I say this for American cynics, but this is also true globally. It’s for real.” So says Zen Buddhist teacher Dr. Larry Ward.

Shot at by the police as an 11-year-old child for playing baseball in the wrong spot, as an adult, Larry Ward experienced the trauma of having his home firebombed by racists. At Plum Village Monastery in France, the home in exile of his teacher, Vietnamese peace activist and Zen teacher Thich Nhat Hanh, Dr. Ward found a way to heal. In these short reflective essays, he offers his insights on the effects of racial constructs and answers the question: how do we free ourselves from our repeated cycles of anger, denial, bitterness, pain, fear, violence? Larry Ward looks at the causes and conditions that have led us to our current state and finds, hidden in the crisis, a profound opportunity to reinvent what it means to be a human being. This is an invitation to transform America’s racial karma.

40. *All Incomplete* by Stefano Harvey, Fred Moten (AK Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#)

Building on the ideas Harney and Moten developed in *The Undercommons*, *All Incomplete* extends the critical investigation of logistics, individuation and sovereignty. It reflects their chances to travel, listen and deepen their commitment to and claim upon partiality.

All Incomplete studies the history of a preference for the force and ground and underground of social existence. Engaging a vibrant constellation of thought that includes the work of Amilcar Cabral, Erica Edwards, Denise Ferreira da Silva, Cedric Robinson, Walter Rodney, Hortense Spillers and many others, Harney and Moten seek to share and understand that preference.

In so doing, Moten and Harney hope to have forged what Manolo Callahan, echoing Ivan Illich, calls a convivial tool that – despite the temptation to improve and demand, develop and govern, separate and grasp – helps us renew our habits of assembly.

41. *Heaven* by Emerson Whitney (McSweeney's, 2020)



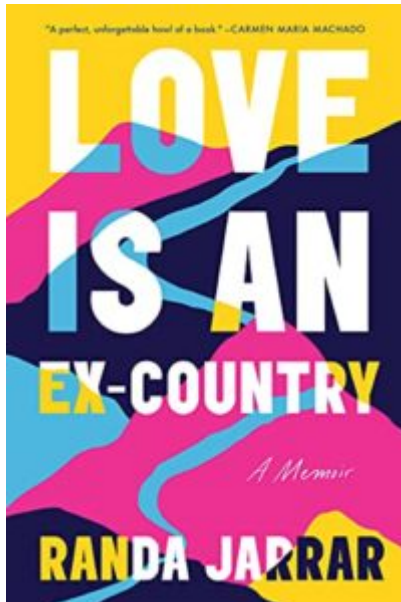
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Emerson Whitney writes, “Really, I can’t explain myself without making a mess.” What follows is that mess-electrifying, gorgeous, defiant.

At *Heaven*’s center, Whitney seeks to understand their relationship to their mother and grandmother, those first windows into womanhood and all its consequences. Whitney retraces a roving youth in deeply observant, psychedelic prose-all the while folding in the work of thinkers like Judith Butler, Donna Haraway, and C. Riley Snorton-to engage transness and the breathing, morphing nature of selfhood.

An expansive examination of what makes us up, *Heaven* wonders what role our childhood plays in who we are. Can we escape the discussion of causality? Is the story of our body just ours? With extraordinary emotional force, Whitney sways between theory and memory in order to explore these brazen questions and write this unforgettable book.

42. *Love is an Ex-Country* by Randa Jarrar (Catapult, 2021)



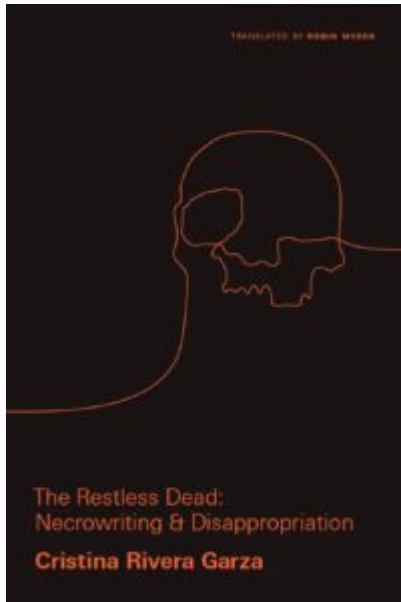
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Randa Jarrar is a fearless voice of dissent who has been called “politically incorrect” (Michelle Goldberg, *The New York Times*). As an American raised for a time in Egypt, and finding herself captivated by the story of a celebrated Egyptian belly dancer’s journey across the United States in the 1940s, she sets off from her home in California to her parents’ in Connecticut.

Coloring this road trip are journeys abroad and recollections of a life lived with daring. Reclaiming her autonomy after a life of survival—domestic assault as a child, and later, as a wife; threats and doxxing after her viral tweet about Barbara Bush—Jarrar offers a bold look at domestic violence, single motherhood, and sexuality through the lens of the punished-yet-triumphant body. On the way, she schools a rest-stop racist, destroys Confederate flags in the desert, and visits the Chicago neighborhood where her immigrant parents first lived.

Hailed as “one of the finest writers of her generation” (Laila Lalami), Jarrar delivers a euphoric and critical, funny and profound memoir that will speak to anyone who has felt erased, asserting: *I am here. I am joyful.*

43. *The Restless Dead: Necrowriting and Disappropriation* by Cristina Rivera Garza, Translated by Robin Myers (Vanderbilt University Press, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Based on comparative readings of contemporary books from Latin America, Spain, and the United States, the essays in this book present a radical critique against strategies of literary appropriation that were once thought of as neutral, and even concomitant, components of the writing process. Debunking the position of the author as the center of analysis, Cristina Rivera Garza argues for the communality—a term used by anthropologist Floriberto Díaz to describe modes of life of Indigenous peoples of Oaxaca based on notions of collaborative labor—permeating all writing processes.

Disappropriating is a political operation at the core of projects acknowledging, both at ethical and aesthetic levels, that writers always work with materials that are not their own. Writers borrow from the practitioners of a language, entering in a debt relationship that can only be covered by ushering the text back to the communities from which it grew. In a world rife with violence, where the experiences of many are erased by pillage and extraction, writing among and for the dead is a form of necrowriting that may well become a life-affirming act of decolonization and resistance.

44. *Defacing the Monument* by Susan Briante (Noemi Press, 2020)

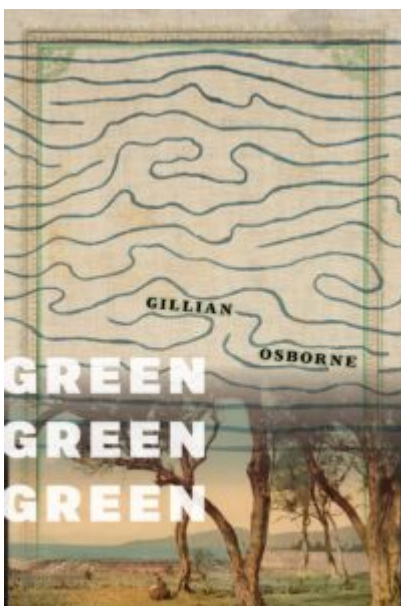


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

DEFACING THE MONUMENT opens with the narration of an Operation Streamline hearing, a proceeding during which as many as 70 undocumented migrants are criminally prosecuted and sentenced en masse to serve jail time prior to deportation. It's an attempt to bear witness to what happens to those who do not hold the "correct" documents as a way to show texts always bear the marks of power.

Documentary poetics offers a tradition and a form through which a writer can situate events or experiences within broad social and historical contexts. It can provide a space to record, to unearth, to witness, and to contextualize. But we can't fetishize the document. And we must use it with an eye toward our own complicity and participation in the systems we wish to investigate. Part documentary act, part lyric essay, part criticism, DEFACING THE MONUMENT enacts the possibilities and limits of documentary impulses.

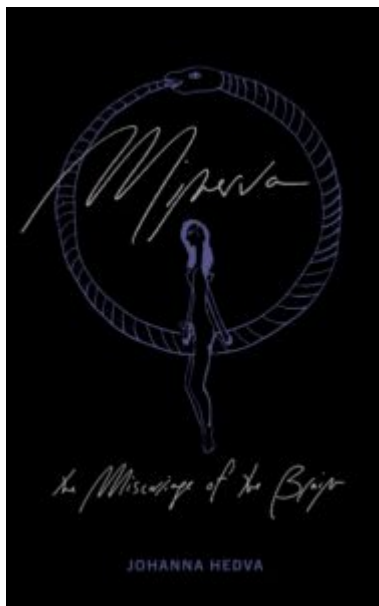
45. *Green Green Green* by Gillian Osborne (Nightboat Books, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

The color green is at the center of the spectrum. For earlier writers like Emily Dickinson or William Blake, the green world was a space of haunting, irreconcilable, opposites: life and death, human and vegetal, innocence and experience. In these essays, letters, repetitions, and experiments, poet and scholar Gillian Osborne adds a third, contemporary, term: the environment as both vital and ailing. This is nature writing outside of adventure or argument, ecological thinking as a space of shared homemaking: reading, writing, and living in vicinity with others.

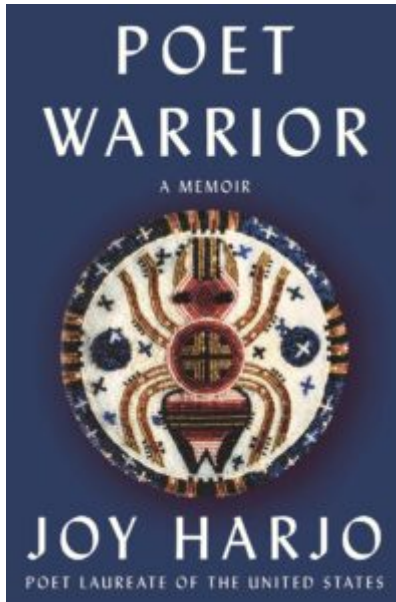
**46. *Minerva the Miscarriage of the Brain* by Johanna Hedva
(Wolfman Books / Sming Sming Books, 2020)**



[Amazon](#)

MINERVA THE MISCARRIAGE OF THE BRAIN collects a decade of work from artist, musician, and author of ON HELL, Johanna Hedva. In plays, performances, an encyclopedia, essays, autohagiography, hypnagogic, and hypnapompic poems-in-texts whose bodies drift and delight in form-Minerva tunnels into mysticism, madness, motherhood, and magic. Minerva gets dirty with the mess of gender and genius. She does the labor of sleep and dreams. She odysseys through Los Angeles, shapeshifting in stygian night and waking up to wail in the light. With illustrations by Isabelle Albuquerque.

47. *Poet Warrior* by Joy Harjo (W.W. Norton, 2021)



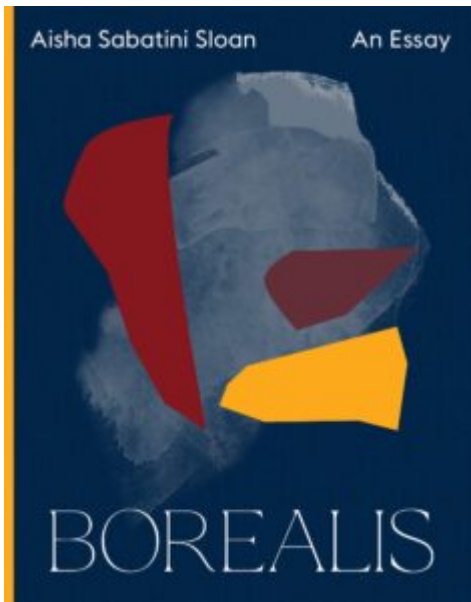
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Joy Harjo, the first Native American to serve as U.S. poet laureate, invites us to travel along the heartaches, losses, and humble realizations of her “poet-warrior” road. A musical, kaleidoscopic, and wise follow-up to *Crazy Brave*, *Poet Warrior* reveals how Harjo came to write poetry of compassion and healing, poetry with the power to unearth the truth and demand justice.

Harjo listens to stories of ancestors and family, the poetry and music that she first encountered as a child, and the messengers of a changing earth—owls heralding grief, resilient desert plants, and a smooth green snake curled up in surprise. She celebrates the influences that shaped her poetry, among them Audre Lorde, N. Scott Momaday, Walt Whitman, Muscogee stomp dance call-and-response, Navajo horse songs, rain, and sunrise. In absorbing, incantatory prose, Harjo grieves at the loss of her mother, reckons with the theft of her ancestral homeland, and sheds light on the rituals that nourish her as an artist, mother, wife, and community member.

Moving fluidly between prose, song, and poetry, Harjo recounts a luminous journey of becoming, a spiritual map that will help us all find home. *Poet Warrior* sings with the jazz, blues, tenderness, and bravery that we know as distinctly Joy Harjo.

48. *Borealis* by Aisha Sabatini Sloan (Coffee House Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

In *Borealis*, Aisha Sabatini Sloan observes shorelines, mountains, bald eagles, and Black fellow travelers while feeling menaced by the specter of nature writing. She considers the meaning of open spaces versus enclosed ones and maps out the web of queer relationships that connect her to this quaint Alaskan town. Triangulating the landscapes she moves through with glacial backdrops in the work of Black conceptual artists and writers, Sabatini Sloan complicates tropes of Alaska to suggest that the excitement, exploration, and possibility of myth-making can also be twinned by isolation, anxiety, and boredom.

49. *Fairest* by Meredith Talusan (Viking, 2020)

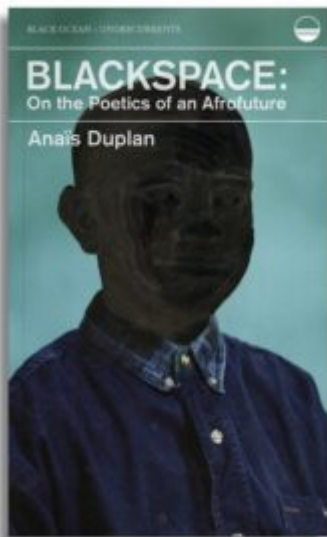


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Fairest is a memoir about a precocious boy with albinism, a “sun child” from a rural Philippine village, who would grow up to become a woman in America. Coping with the strain of parental neglect and the elusive promise of U.S. citizenship, Talusan found childhood comfort from her devoted grandmother, a

grounding force as she was treated by others with special preference or public curiosity. As an immigrant to the United States, Talusan came to be perceived as white. An academic scholarship to Harvard provided access to elite circles of privilege but required Talusan to navigate through the complex spheres of race, class, sexuality, and her place within the gay community. She emerged as an artist and an activist questioning the boundaries of gender. Talusan realized she did not want to be confined to a prescribed role as a man, and transitioned to become a woman, despite the risk of losing a man she deeply loved. Throughout her journey, Talusan shares poignant and powerful episodes of desirability and love that will remind readers of works such as *Call Me By Your Name* and *Giovanni's Room*. Her evocative reflections will shift our own perceptions of love, identity, gender, and the fairness of life.

50. *Blackspace: On the Poetics of an Afrofuture* by Anaïs Duplan (Black Ocean, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Blackspace: On the Poetics of an Afrofuture is the culmination of six years of multidisciplinary research by trans poet and curator Anaïs Duplan about the aesthetic strategies used by experimental artists of color since the 1960s to pursue liberatory possibility. Through a series of lyric essays, interviews with contemporary artists and writers of color, and ekphrastic poetry, Duplan deconstructs how creative people frame their relationships to the word, “liberation.” With a focus on creatives who use digital media and language-as-technology—luminaries like Actress, Juliana Huxtable, Lawrence Andrews, Tony Cokes, Sondra Perry, and Nathaniel Mackey—Duplan offers three lenses for thinking about liberation: the personal, the social, and the existential. Arguing that true freedom is impossible without considering all three, the book culminates with a personal essay meditating on the author’s own journey of gender transition while writing the book.

51. *I Will Take the Answer* by Ander Monson (Graywolf Press, 2020)

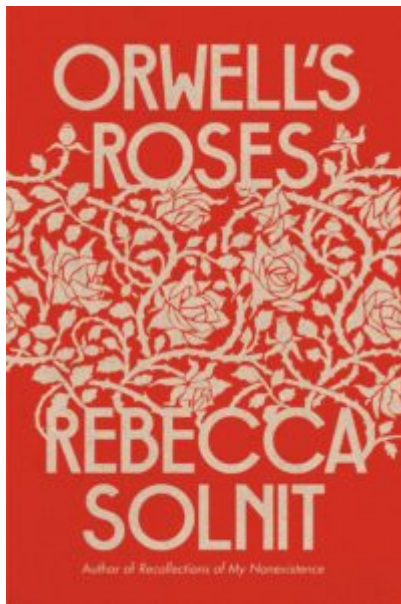


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

The idea of connection permeates *I Will Take the Answer*, Ander Monson's fourth book of utterly original and intelligent essays. How is our present connected to our past and future? How do neural connections form memories, and why do we recall them when we do? And how do we connect with one another in meaningful ways across time and space?

In the opening essay, which extends across the book in brief subsequent pieces, a trip through a storm sewer in Tucson inspires Monson to trace the city's relationship to Jared Lee Loughner, the gunman who shot Gabrielle Giffords and killed six bystanders, along with how violence is produced and how we grieve and honor the dead. With the formally inventive "I in River," he ruminates on water in a waterless city and the structures we use to attempt to contain and control it. Monson also visits the exuberantly nerdy kingdom of a Renaissance Faire, and elaborates on the enduring appeal of sad songs through the lens of March Sadness, an online competition that he cofounded, an engaging riff on the NCAA basketball tournament brackets in which sad songs replace teams.

52. *Orwell's Roses* by Rebecca Solnit (Viking, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

“In the year 1936 a writer planted roses.” So begins Rebecca Solnit’s new book, a reflection on George Orwell’s passionate gardening and the way that his involvement with plants, particularly flowers, and the natural world illuminates his other commitments as a writer and antifascist, and the intertwined politics of nature and power.

Sparked by her unexpected encounter with the surviving roses he planted in 1936, Solnit’s account of this understudied aspect of Orwell’s life explores his writing and his actions—from going deep into the coal mines of England, fighting in the Spanish Civil War, critiquing Stalin when much of the international left still supported him (and then critiquing that left), to his analysis of the relationship between lies and authoritarianism. Through Solnit’s celebrated ability to draw unexpected connections, readers encounter the photographer Tina Modotti’s roses and her Stalinism, Stalin’s obsession with forcing lemons to grow in impossibly cold conditions, Orwell’s slave-owning ancestors in Jamaica, Jamaica Kincaid’s critique of colonialism and imperialism in the flower garden, and the brutal rose industry in Colombia that supplies the American market. The book draws to a close with a rereading of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* that completes her portrait of a more hopeful Orwell, as well as a reflection on pleasure, beauty, and joy as acts of resistance.

53. *Girlhood* by Melissa Febos (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021)



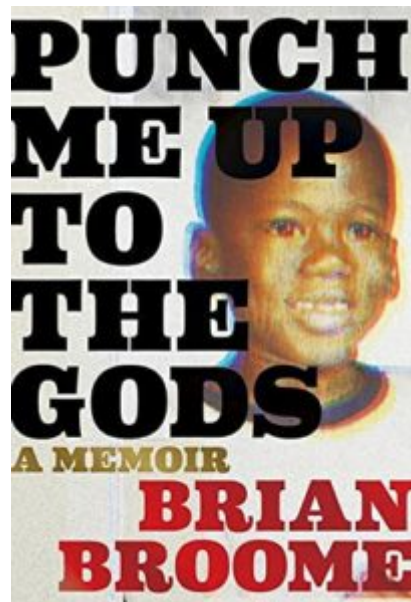
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

In her powerful new book, critically acclaimed author Melissa Febos examines the narratives women are told about what it means to be female and what it takes to free oneself from them.

When her body began to change at eleven years old, Febos understood immediately that her meaning to other people had changed with it. By her teens, she defined herself based on these perceptions and by the romantic relationships she threw herself into headlong. Over time, Febos increasingly questioned the stories she'd been told about herself and the habits and defenses she'd developed over years of trying to meet others' expectations. The values she and so many other women had learned in girlhood did not prioritize their personal safety, happiness, or freedom, and she set out to reframe those values and beliefs.

Blending investigative reporting, memoir, and scholarship, Febos charts how she and others like her have reimaged relationships and made room for the anger, grief, power, and pleasure women have long been taught to deny. Written with Febos' characteristic precision, lyricism, and insight, *Girlhood* is a philosophical treatise, an anthem for women, and a searing study of the transitions into and away from girlhood, toward a chosen self.

54. *Punch Me Up to the Gods* by Brian Broome (Mariner, 2021)

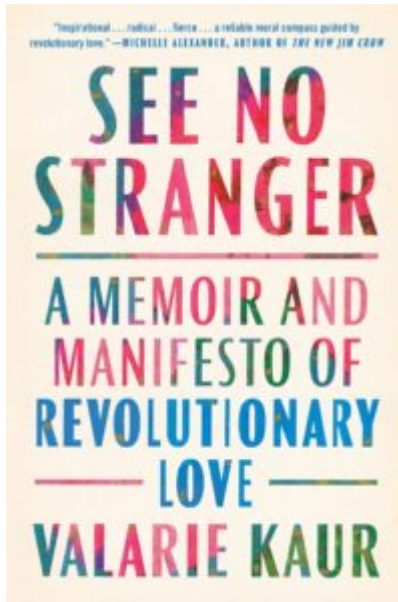


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Punch Me Up to the Gods introduces a powerful new talent in Brian Broome, whose early years growing up in Ohio as a dark-skinned Black boy harboring crushes on other boys propel forward this gorgeous, aching, and unforgettable debut. Brian's recounting of his experiences—in all their cringe-worthy, hilarious, and heartbreaking glory—reveal a perpetual outsider awkwardly squirming to find his way in. Indiscriminate sex and escalating drug use help to soothe his hurt, young psyche, usually to uproarious and devastating effect. A no-nonsense mother and broken father play crucial roles in our misfit's origin story. But it is Brian's voice in the retelling that shows the true depth of vulnerability for young Black boys that is often quietly near to bursting at the seams.

Cleverly framed around Gwendolyn Brooks's poem "We Real Cool," the iconic and loving ode to Black boyhood, *Punch Me Up to the Gods* is at once playful, poignant, and wholly original. Broome's writing brims with swagger and sensitivity, bringing an exquisite and fresh voice to ongoing cultural conversations about Blackness in America.

55. See *No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love* by Valerie Kaur (One World, 2020)

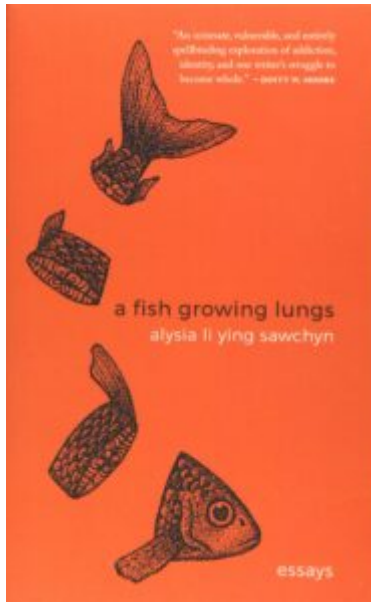


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

How do we love in a time of rage? How do we fix a broken world while not breaking ourselves? Valarie Kaur—renowned Sikh activist, filmmaker, and civil rights lawyer—describes revolutionary love as the call of our time, a radical, joyful practice that extends in three directions: to others, to our opponents, and to ourselves. It enjoins us to see no stranger but instead look at others and say: *You are part of me I do not yet know*. Starting from that place of wonder, the world begins to change: It is a practice that can transform a relationship, a community, a culture, even a nation.

Kaur takes readers through her own riveting journey—as a brown girl growing up in California farmland finding her place in the world; as a young adult galvanized by the murders of Sikhs after 9/11; as a law student fighting injustices in American prisons and on Guantánamo Bay; as an activist working with communities recovering from xenophobic attacks; and as a woman trying to heal from her own experiences with police violence and sexual assault. Drawing from the wisdom of sages, scientists, and activists, Kaur reclaims love as an active, public, and revolutionary force that creates new possibilities for ourselves, our communities, and our world. *See No Stranger* helps us imagine new ways of being with each other—and with ourselves—so that together we can begin to build the world we want to see.

56. *A Fish Growing Lungs* by Alysia Li Ying Sawchyn (Burrow Press, 2020)



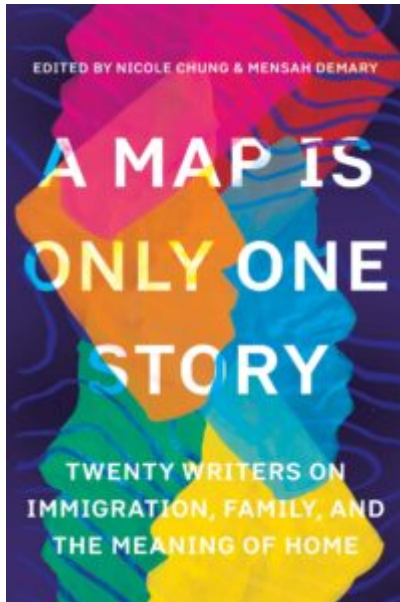
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

At age 18 Alysia Sawchyn was diagnosed with bipolar I. Seven years later she learned she had been misdiagnosed. *A Fish Growing Lungs* takes the form of linked essays that reflect on Sawchyn's diagnosis and its unraveling, the process of withdrawal and recovery, and the search for identity as she emerges from a difficult past into a cautiously hopeful present.

Sawchyn captures the precariousness of life under the watchful eye of doctors, friends, and family, in which saying or doing the wrong thing could lead to involuntary confinement. This scrutiny is compounded by the stigmas of mental illness and the societal expectations placed on the bodies of women and women of color. And yet, amid juggling medications, doubting her diagnosis, and struggling with addiction and cutting, there is also joy, friendship, love, and Slayer concerts.

Funny, intelligent, and unflinchingly honest, Sawchyn explores how we can come to know ourselves when our bodies betray us. Drawing from life experience, literature, music, medical journals, films, and recovery communities, each essay illuminates the richness of self-knowledge that comes from the act of writing itself.

57. *A Map is Only One Story: Twenty Writers on Immigration, Family, and the Meaning of Home*, Edited by Nicole Chung, Mensah Demary (Catapult, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Selected from the archives of *Catapult* magazine, the essays in *A Map Is Only One Story* highlight the human side of immigration policies and polarized rhetoric, as twenty writers share provocative personal stories of existing between languages and cultures.

Victoria Blanco relates how those with family in both El Paso and Ciudad Juárez experience life on the border. Nina Li Coomes recalls the heroines of Japanese animator Hayao Miyazaki and what they taught her about her bicultural identity. Nur Nasreen Ibrahim details her grandfather's crossing of the India-Pakistan border sixty years after Partition. Krystal A. Sital writes of how undocumented status in the United States can impact love and relationships. Porochista Khakpour describes the challenges in writing (and rewriting) Iranian America. Through the power of personal narratives, as told by both emerging and established writers, *A Map Is Only One Story* offers a new definition of home in the twenty-first century.

58. *Bright Archive* by Sarah Minor (Rescue Press, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

In Sarah Minor's adventurous and investigatory debut collection of essays, *BRIGHT ARCHIVE*, place and space are inextricably linked through an imaginative exploration of the patterns, shapes, and systems that alternately organize and disrupt our ordinary intimacies. From a recollection of a summer spent working in an Italian commune to the business of mollusks in Minor's grandparents' hometown in Iowa; from the history of the mapping of the Mississippi River to the mythologies of the image of "the lean;" from studies of soffits and hidden spaces to the freedom found at the top of an island birch tree, these essays reach beyond the classically confined trajectories of literary nonfiction. Using elements of memoir, concrete poetry, archival research, interview, performance, and design in a radiant kaleidoscope of storytelling, the essays in *BRIGHT ARCHIVE* delight in challenging the reader's habits of interaction with the page and its possibilities.

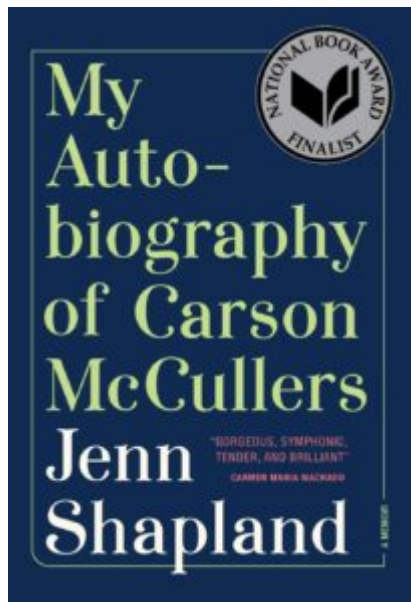
59. *Selling the Farm* by Debra Di Blasi (C&R Press, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Raised in a family of seven, in a small ramshackle farmhouse without plumbing, author Debra Di Blasi maps a candid and eloquent memoir of a Midwest childhood both land rich and dirt poor, both heaven and hell. Surrounded by creatures big and small, rolling fields and pastures, weedy lawn, deep woods and shimmering waters, she wrestles with the complexity of a crowded family shaped by place and doomed to tear itself apart. *SELLING THE FARM* explores the difficult intersection of grief and love, and the many contradictions in nature, life and death, and memory itself. Her lyrical recollections move from season to season with language visually and aurally shaped to reconsider the ways that we bear witness to any place and time-and to ourselves amid all. As personal and global extinctions loom in the foreground, and family farms become increasingly scarce, these elegiac ruminations remind us how much has been-and will be-lost to us all.

60. *My Autobiography of Carson McCullers* by Jenn Shapland (Tin House, 2021)



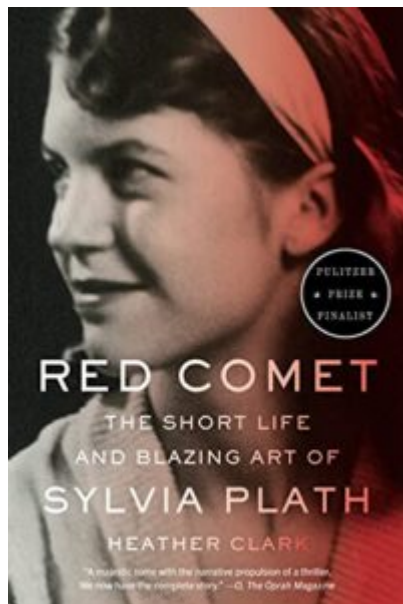
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

How do you tell the real story of someone misremembered—an icon and idol—alongside your own? Jenn Shapland’s celebrated debut is both question and answer: an immersive, surprising exploration of one of America’s most beloved writers, alongside a genre-defying examination of identity, queerness, memory, obsession, and love.

Shapland is a graduate student when she first uncovers letters written to Carson McCullers by a woman named Annemarie. Though Shapland recognizes herself in the letters, which are intimate and unabashed in their feelings, she does not see McCullers as history has portrayed her. Her curiosity gives way to fixation, not just with this newly discovered side of McCullers’s life, but with how we tell queer love stories. Why, Shapland asks, are the stories of women paved over by others’ narratives? What happens when constant revision is required of queer women trying to navigate and self-actualize in straight spaces? And what might the tracing of McCullers’s life—her history, her secrets, her legacy—reveal to Shapland about herself?

In smart, illuminating prose, Shapland interweaves her own story with McCullers's to create a vital new portrait of one of our nation's greatest literary treasures, and shows us how the writers we love and the stories we tell about ourselves make us who we are.

61. *Red Comet: The Short Life and Blazing Art of Sylvia Plath* by Heather Clark (Vintage, 2021)

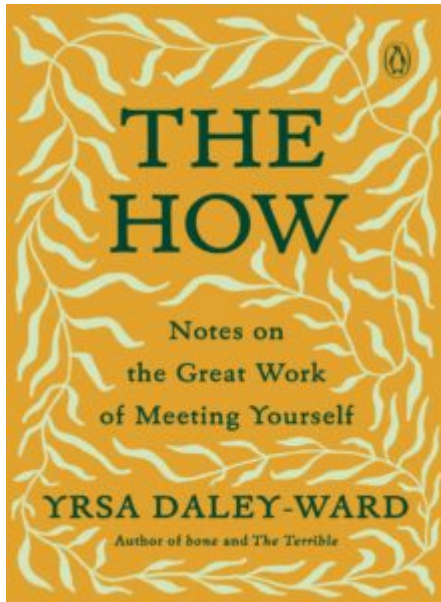


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

With a wealth of never-before-accessed materials, Heather Clark brings to life the brilliant Sylvia Plath, who had precocious poetic ambition and was an accomplished published writer even before she became a star at Smith College. Refusing to read Plath's work as if her every act was a harbinger of her tragic fate, Clark considers the sociopolitical context as she thoroughly explores Plath's world: her early relationships and determination not to become a conventional woman and wife; her troubles with an unenlightened mental health industry; her Cambridge years and thunderclap meeting with Ted Hughes; and much more.

Clark's clear-eyed portraits of Hughes, his lover Assia Wevill, and other demonized players in the arena of Plath's suicide promote a deeper understanding of her final days. Along with illuminating readings of the poems themselves, Clark's meticulous, compassionate research brings us closer than ever to the spirited woman and visionary artist who blazed a trail that still lights the way for women poets the world over.

62. *The How: Notes on the Great Work of Meeting Yourself* by Yrsa Daley-Ward (Penguin Books, 2021)



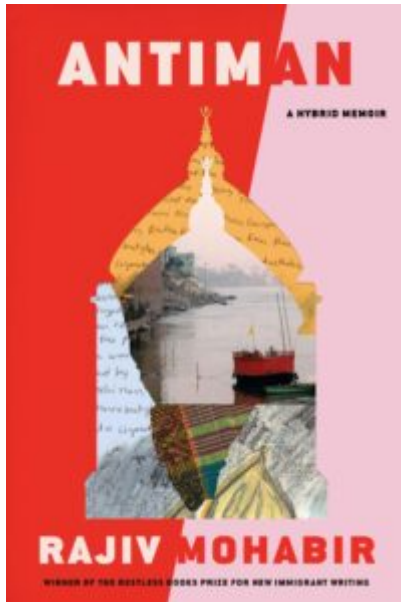
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Yrsa Daley-Ward’s words have resonated with hundreds of thousands of readers—through her books of poetry and memoir, *bone* and *The Terrible*; through her writing for Beyoncé on *Black Is King*; and through her always illuminating Instagram posts.

Now, in *The How*, Yrsa encourages readers to begin, as she puts it, the great work of meeting ourselves. This isn’t the self we’ve built up in response to our surroundings, or the self we manufacture to please the people around us, but instead, our most intimate self, the one we visit in dreams, the one that calls to us from a glimmering future.

With a mix of short lyrical musings and her signature stunning poetry, Yrsa gently takes readers by the hand, encouraging them to join her as she explores how we can remove our filters, and see and feel more of who we really are behind the preconceived notions of propriety and manners we’ve accumulated with age. With a beautiful design and intriguing meditations, *The How* can be used to start conversations, to prompt writing, to delve deeper—whether you’re solo, or with friends, on your feet or writing from the solace of home.

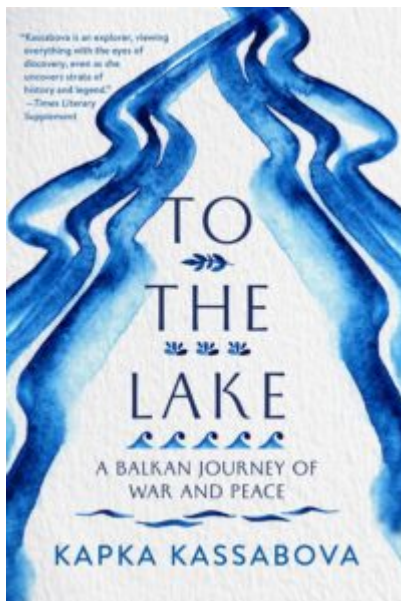
63. *Antiman: A Hybrid Memoir* by Rajiv Mohabir (Restless Books, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Growing up a Guyanese Indian immigrant in Central Florida, Rajiv Mohabir is fascinated by his family's abandoned Hindu history and the legacy of his ancestors, who were indentured laborers on British sugarcane plantations. In Toronto he sits at the feet of Aji, his grandmother, listening to her stories and songs in her Caribbean Bhojpuri. By now Aji's eleven children have immigrated to North America and busied themselves with ascension, Christianity, and the erasure of their heritage and Caribbean accents. But Rajiv wants to know more: where did he come from, and why does he feel so out of place?

64. *To the Lake: A Balkan Journey of War and Peace* by Kapka Kassabova (Graywolf Press, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

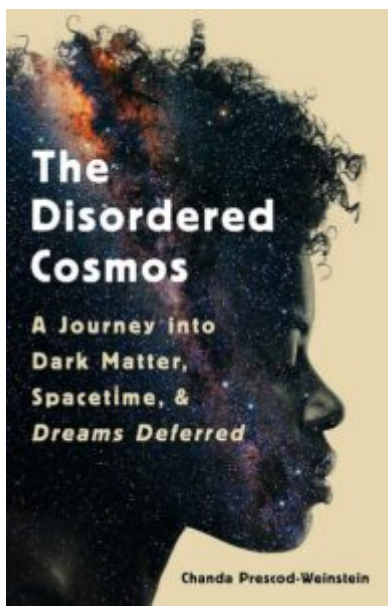
Lake Ohrid and Lake Prespa. Two ancient lakes joined by underground rivers. Two lakes that seem to hold both the turbulent memories of the region's past and the secret of its enduring allure. Two lakes that have played a central

role in Kapka Kassabova's maternal family.

As she journeys to her grandmother's place of origin, Kassabova encounters a historic crossroads. The lakes are set within the mountainous borderlands of North Macedonia, Albania, and Greece, and crowned by the old Via Egnatia, which once connected Rome to Constantinople. A former trading and spiritual nexus of the southern Balkans, this lake region remains one of Eurasia's most diverse corners. Meanwhile, with their remote rock churches, changeable currents, and large population of migratory birds, the lakes live in their own time.

By exploring on water and land the stories of poets, fishermen, and caretakers, misfits, rulers, and inheritors of war and exile, Kassabova uncovers the human destinies shaped by the lakes. Setting out to resolve her own ancestral legacy, Kassabova locates a deeper inquiry into how geography and politics imprint themselves upon families and nations, one that confronts her with universal questions about human suffering and the capacity for change.

65. *The Disordered Cosmos: A Journey into Dark Matter, Spacetime, and Dreams Deferred* by Chanda Prescod-Weinstein (Bold Type Books, 2021)



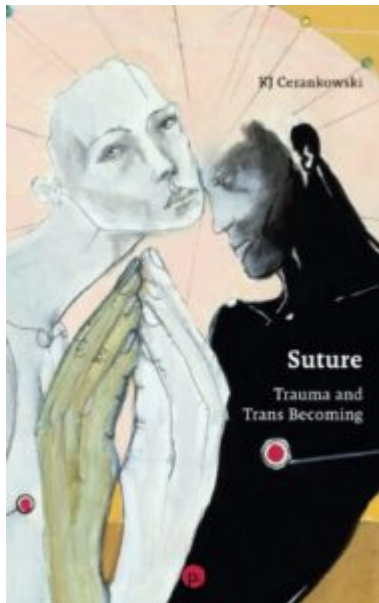
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

In *The Disordered Cosmos*, Dr. Chanda Prescod-Weinstein shares her love for physics, from the Standard Model of Particle Physics and what lies beyond it, to the physics of melanin in skin, to the latest theories of dark matter – all with a new spin informed by history, politics, and the wisdom of Star Trek.

One of the leading physicists of her generation, Dr. Chanda Prescod-Weinstein is also one of fewer than one hundred Black American women to earn a PhD from a department of physics. Her vision of the cosmos is vibrant, buoyantly non-traditional, and grounded in Black feminist traditions.

Prescod-Weinstein urges us to recognize how science, like most fields, is rife with racism, sexism, and other dehumanizing systems. She lays out a bold new approach to science and society that begins with the belief that we all have a fundamental right to know and love the night sky. *The Disordered Cosmos* dreams into existence a world that allows everyone to experience and understand the wonders of the universe.

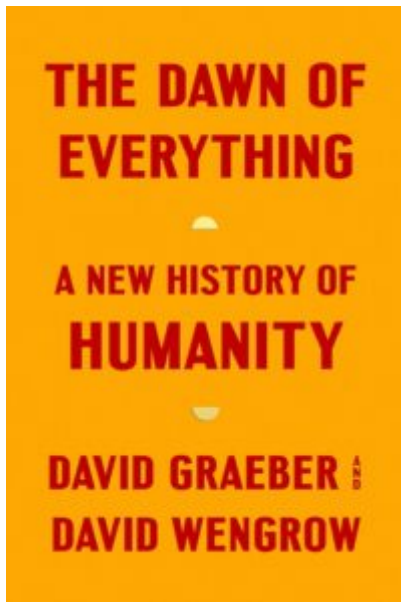
66. *Suture: Trauma and Trans Becoming* by KJ Cerankowski (Punctum Books, 2021)



[Amazon](#)

Combining memoir, lyrical essay, and cultural criticism, KJ Cerankowski's *Suture: Trauma and Trans Becoming* stitches together an embodied history of trauma and its ongoing impacts on the lived realities of trans, queer, and other marginalized subjects. *Suture* is a conjuration, a patchwork knitting of ghost stories attending to the wound as its own archive. It is a journey through many "transitions": of gender; through illness and chronic pain; from childhood to adulthood and back again; of psyche and form in the wake of abuse and through the work of healing; and of the self, becoming in and through the ongoingness of settler colonial violence and its attendant subjugations of diverse forms of life.

67. *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* by David Graeber, David Wengrow (FSG, 2021)

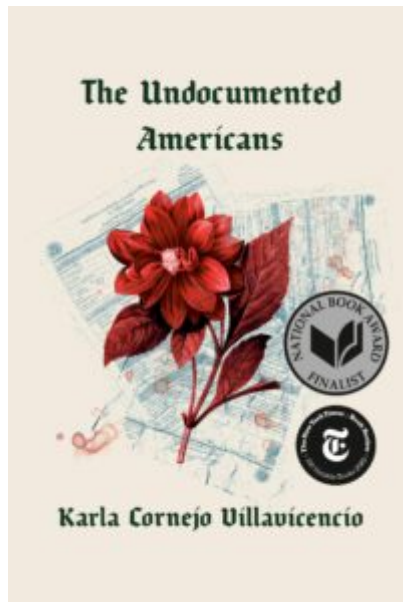


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Drawing on pathbreaking research in archaeology and anthropology, the authors show how history becomes a far more interesting place once we learn to throw off our conceptual shackles and perceive what's really there. If humans did not spend 95 percent of their evolutionary past in tiny bands of hunter-gatherers, what were they doing all that time? If agriculture, and cities, did not mean a plunge into hierarchy and domination, then what kinds of social and economic organization did they lead to? The answers are often unexpected, and suggest that the course of human history may be less set in stone, and more full of playful, hopeful possibilities, than we tend to assume.

The Dawn of Everything fundamentally transforms our understanding of the human past and offers a path toward imagining new forms of freedom, new ways of organizing society. This is a monumental book of formidable intellectual range, animated by curiosity, moral vision, and a faith in the power of direct action.

68. *The Undocumented Americans* by Karla Cornejo Villavicencio (One World, 2020)

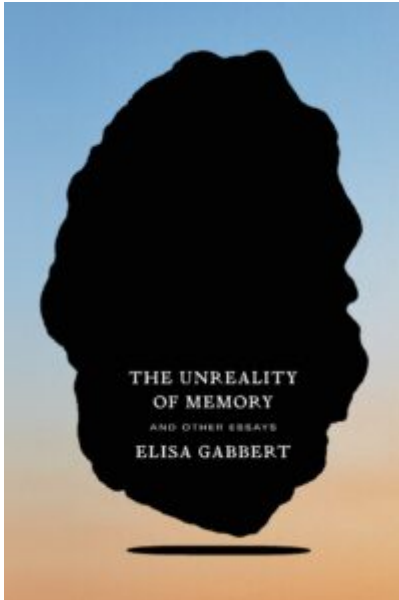


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Writer Karla Cornejo Villavicencio was on DACA when she decided to write about being undocumented for the first time using her own name. It was right after the election of 2016, the day she realized the story she'd tried to steer clear of was the only one she wanted to tell. So she wrote her immigration lawyer's phone number on her hand in Sharpie and embarked on a trip across the country to tell the stories of her fellow undocumented immigrants—and to find the hidden key to her own.

Looking beyond the flashpoints of the border or the activism of the DREAMers, Cornejo Villavicencio explores the lives of the undocumented—and the mysteries of her own life. She finds the singular, effervescent characters across the nation often reduced in the media to political pawns or nameless laborers. The stories she tells are not deferential or naively inspirational but show the love, magic, heartbreak, insanity, and vulgarity that infuse the day-to-day lives of her subjects.

69. *The Unreality of Memory* by Elisa Gabbert (FSG, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

We stare at our phones. We keep multiple tabs open. Our chats and conversations are full of the phrase “Did you see?” The feeling that we’re living in the worst of times seems to be intensifying, alongside a desire to know precisely how bad things have gotten—and each new catastrophe distracts us from the last.

The Unreality of Memory collects provocative, searching essays on disaster culture, climate anxiety, and our mounting collective sense of doom. In this new collection, acclaimed poet and essayist Elisa Gabbert explores our obsessions with disasters past and future, from the sinking of the *Titanic* to Chernobyl, from witch hunts to the plague. These deeply researched, prophetic meditations question how the world will end—if indeed it will—and why we can’t stop fantasizing about it.

Can we avoid repeating history? Can we understand our moment from inside the moment? With *The Unreality of Memory*, Gabbert offers a hauntingly perceptive analysis of our new ways of being and a means of reconciling ourselves to this unreal new world.

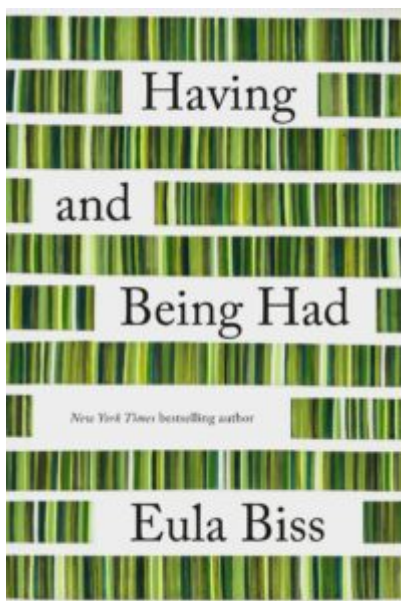
70. *Black Imagination: Black Voices on Black Futures*, Edited by Natasha Marin (McSweeney’s, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

“Witnessing is sacred work too. Seeing ourselves as whole and healthy is an act of pure rebellion in a world so titillated by our constant subjugation,” reflects viral curator Natasha Marin on *Black Imagination*. This dynamic collection of Black voices works like an incantation of origin, healing, and imagination. Born from a series of conceptual art exhibitions, the perspectives gathered here are nowhere near monochromatic. “Craving nuance over stereotype, we sought out black children, black youth, LGBTQ+ black folks, unsheltered black folks, incarcerated black folks, neurodivergent black folks, as well as differently-abled black folks.” Each insists on their own variance and challenges readers to witness for themselves that Black Lives (and Imaginations) Matter.

71. *Having and Being Had* by Eula Biss (Riverhead Books, 2020)

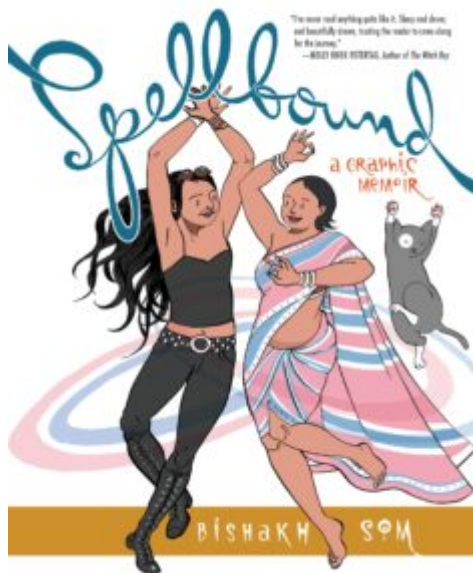


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

“My adult life can be divided into two distinct parts,” Eula Biss writes, “the time before I owned a washing machine and the time after.” Having just

purchased her first home, the poet and essayist now embarks on a provocative exploration of the value system she has bought into. Through a series of engaging exchanges—in libraries and laundromats, over barstools and backyard fences—she examines our assumptions about class and property and the ways we internalize the demands of capitalism. Described by the *New York Times* as a writer who “advances from all sides, like a chess player,” Biss offers an uncommonly immersive and deeply revealing new portrait of work and luxury, of accumulation and consumption, of the value of time and how we spend it. Ranging from IKEA to Beyoncé to Pokemon, Biss asks, of both herself and her class, “In what have we invested?”

72. *Spellbound: A Graphic Memoir* by Bisakh Som (Street Noise Books, 2020)

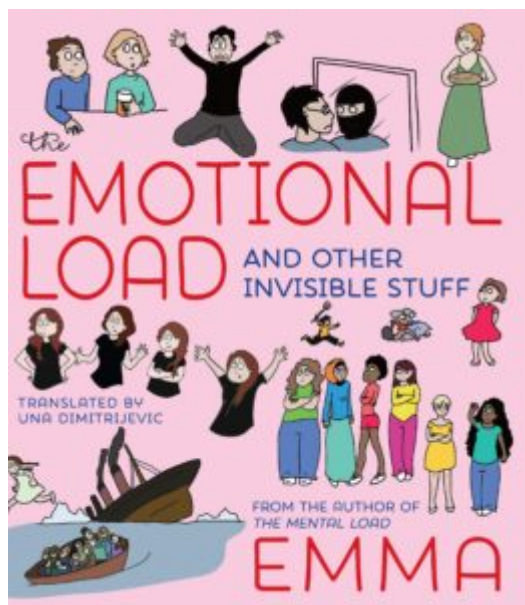


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

“*Spellbound* is an intimate experience, highlighting some of the most powerful elements of comics for me—not only the struggle of creating the work in the first place, but of realizing so much about oneself in the process. Som’s humour and sincerity is well complemented by the expressive lines of her characters, creating elegant artwork that flows like good conversation.”
—Emily Carroll, illustrator of *Speak: A Graphic Novel* and author of *Through the Woods*

“I’ve never read anything quite like *Spellbound* – an exploration of how the narratives we construct can reveal deeper truths, a book about discovery whose creation was the path to the discovery. It’s sharp and clever, beautifully drawn, and trusts the reader to come along for the journey. I can’t wait to see what Bishakh Som does next!” —Molly Knox Ostertag, author of *The Witch Boy*

**73. *The Emotional Load: And Other Invisible Stuff* by Emma,
Translated by Una Dimitrijevic (Seven Stories Press, 2020)**



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

After the success of *The Mental Load*, Emma continues in her new book to tangle with issues pertinent to women's experiences, from consent to the "power of love," from the care and attentiveness that women place on others' wellbeing and social cohesion, and how it constitutes another burden on women, to contraception, to the true nature of gallantry, from the culture of rape to diets, from safety in public spaces to retirement, along with social issues such as police violence, women's rights, and green capitalism. And, once more, she hits the mark.

74. *Before the Earth Devours Us* by Esteban Rodriguez (Split Lip Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#)

In Esteban Rodríguez's debut essay collection *Before the Earth Devours Us*, a

young boy emerges from the valley of childhood memories, curious and seeking to understand a world that is violent, uncertain, and as full of loss as it is of life from the people who inhabit it. Here, the pages unfurl with uncles engaged in physical conflict; dogs roam neighborhoods and alleyways; a dead bird is used as a play object; and our protagonist, through observation and conflict of his own, begins to make sense of the impact he and his body have on others. Lyrical, engaging, and always honest, Rodríguez's memorable collection reminds us that the past is never beyond language's redemption.

75. *Art in Time* by Cole Swensen (Nightboat Books, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Historically, much landscape art has reinforced binaries such as inside/outside, subject/object, and culture/nature, thus reducing a complex network to an ornament that reinforces a sense of human power over nature, imposes specific cultural values, and/or claims or exercises control. And yet there are also artists who have developed alternatives to conventional depictions of the world around them, using landscape to participate in the earth, active in its view and its viewing. The art addressed in the book presents landscape as engagement rather than as detached observation, encouraging an increased sense of belonging to, and thus responsibility for, the earth.

76. *Goodbye, Again* by Jonny Sun (Harper Perennial, 2021)



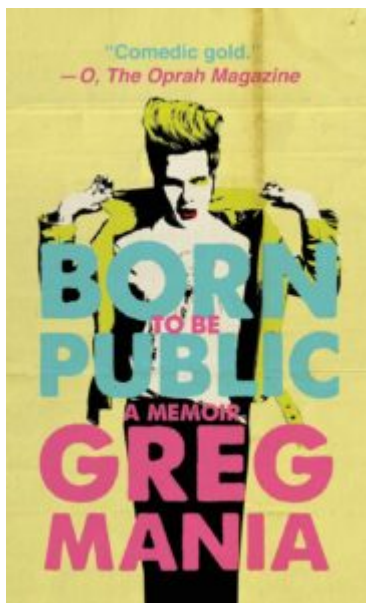
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Jonny Sun is back with a collection of essays and other writings in his unique, funny, and heartfelt style. The pieces range from long meditations on topics like loneliness and being an outsider, to short humor pieces, conversations, and memorable one-liners.

Jonny's honest writings about his struggles with feeling productive, as well as his difficulties with anxiety and depression will connect deeply with his fans as well as anyone attempting to create in our chaotic world.

It also features a recipe for scrambled eggs that might make you cry.

77. *Born to be Public* by Greg Mania (Clash Books, 2020)

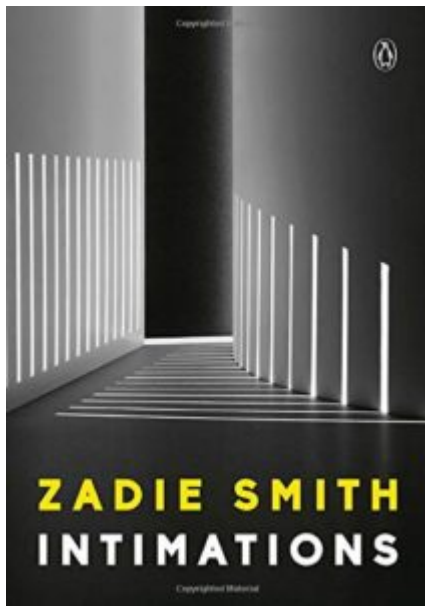


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

In this unique and hilarious debut memoir, writer and comedian Greg Mania chronicles life as a “pariah prodigy.” From inadvertently coming out to his Polish immigrant parents, to immersing himself in the world of New York City

nightlife, and finding himself and his voice in comedy. *Born to Be Public* is a vulnerable and poignant exploration of identity (and the rediscovery of it), mental health, sex and relationships, all while pursuing a passion with victories and tragicomic blunders. At once raw and relatable, Mania's one-of-a-kind voice will make you shed tears from laughter and find its way into your heart.

78. *Intimations* by Zadie Smith (Penguin Books, 2020)



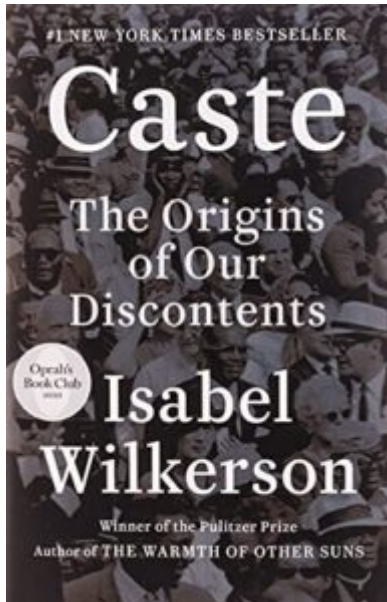
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Written during the early months of lockdown, *Intimations* explores ideas and questions prompted by an unprecedented situation. What does it mean to submit to a new reality—or to resist it? How do we compare relative sufferings? What is the relationship between time and work? In our isolation, what do other people mean to us? How do we think about them? What is the ratio of contempt to compassion in a crisis? When an unfamiliar world arrives, what does it reveal about the world that came before it?

Suffused with a profound intimacy and tenderness in response to these extraordinary times, *Intimations* is a slim, suggestive volume with a wide scope, in which Zadie Smith clears a generous space for thought, open enough for each reader to reflect on what has happened—and what should come next.

The author will donate her royalties from the sale of *Intimations* to charity.

79. *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson (Random House, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

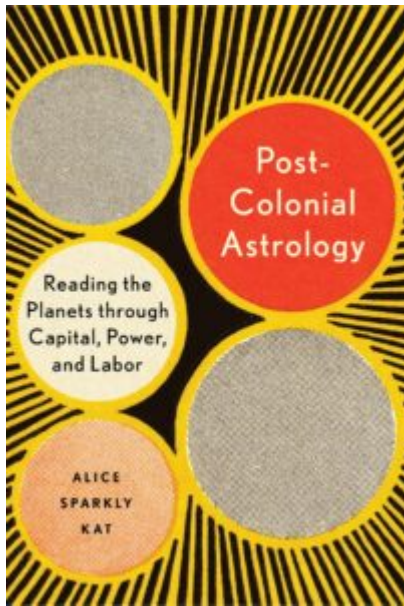
In this brilliant book, Isabel Wilkerson gives us a masterful portrait of an unseen phenomenon in America as she explores, through an immersive, deeply researched narrative and stories about real people, how America today and throughout its history has been shaped by a hidden caste system, a rigid hierarchy of human rankings.

Beyond race, class, or other factors, there is a powerful caste system that influences people's lives and behavior and the nation's fate. Linking the caste systems of America, India, and Nazi Germany, Wilkerson explores eight pillars that underlie caste systems across civilizations, including divine will, bloodlines, stigma, and more. Using riveting stories about people—including Martin Luther King, Jr., baseball's Satchel Paige, a single father and his toddler son, Wilkerson herself, and many others—she shows the ways that the insidious undertow of caste is experienced every day. She documents how the Nazis studied the racial systems in America to plan their out-cast of the Jews; she discusses why the cruel logic of caste requires that there be a bottom rung for those in the middle to measure themselves against; she writes about the surprising health costs of caste, in depression and life expectancy, and the effects of this hierarchy on our culture and politics. Finally, she points forward to ways America can move beyond the artificial and destructive separations of human divisions, toward hope in our common humanity.

Beautifully written, original, and revealing, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* is an eye-opening story of people and history, and a reexamination of what lies under the surface of ordinary lives and of American life today.

80. *Post-Colonial Astrology: Reading the Planets Through Capital, Power, and Labor* by Alice Sparkly Kat (North Atlantic Books,

2021)



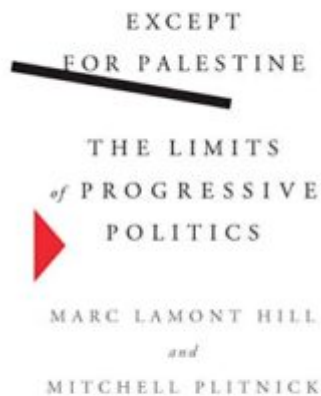
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

In a cross-cultural approach to understanding astrology as a magical language, Alice Sparkly Kat unmaskes the political power of astrology, showing how it can be channeled as a force for collective healing and liberation.

Too often, magic and astrology are divorced from their potency and cultural contexts: co-opted by neoliberalism, used as a force of oppression, or distilled beyond recognition into applications that belie their individual and collective power. By looking at the symbolic and etymological histories of the sun, moon, Saturn, Venus, Mercury, Mars, and Jupiter, we can trace and understand the politics of magic—and challenge our own practices, interrogate our truths, and reshape our institutions to build better frameworks for communities of care.

Fearless, radical, and fresh, Sparkly Kat's *Postcolonial Astrology* ushers in a new wave of astrology revival, refusing to apologize for its magickism and connecting its power to the spirituality and politics we need now. Intersectional, inclusive, and geared towards queer and POC communities, it uses our historical and collective constructs of the planets, sun, and moon to re-chart our subconscious history, redefine the body in the world, and assert our politics of the personal, in astrology and all things.

81. *Except for Palestine: The Limits of Progressive Politics* by Mark Lamont Hill, Mitchell Plitnick (The New Press, 2021)

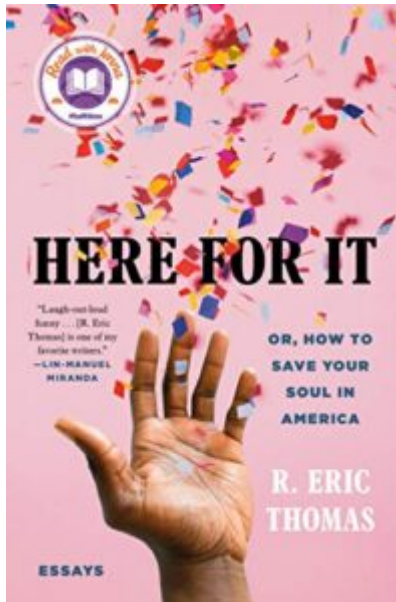


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

In this major work of daring criticism and analysis, scholar and political commentator Marc Lamont Hill and Israel-Palestine expert Mitchell Plitnick spotlight how holding fast to one-sided and unwaveringly pro-Israel policies reflects the truth-bending grip of authoritarianism on both Israel and the United States. *Except for Palestine* deftly argues that progressives and liberals who oppose regressive policies on immigration, racial justice, gender equality, LGBTQ rights, and other issues must extend these core principles to the oppression of Palestinians. In doing so, the authors take seriously the political concerns and well-being of both Israelis and Palestinians, demonstrating the extent to which U.S. policy has made peace harder to attain. They also unravel the conflation of advocacy for Palestinian rights with anti-Semitism and hatred of Israel.

Hill and Plitnick provide a timely and essential intervention by examining multiple dimensions of the Israeli-Palestinian conversation, including Israel's growing disdain for democracy, the effects of occupation on Palestine, the siege of Gaza, diminishing American funding for Palestinian relief, and the campaign to stigmatize any critique of Israeli occupation. *Except for Palestine* is a searing polemic and a cri de coeur for elected officials, activists, and everyday citizens alike to align their beliefs and politics with their values.

82. *Here For It: Or, How to Save Your Soul in America* by R. Eric Thomas (Ballantine Books, 2020)



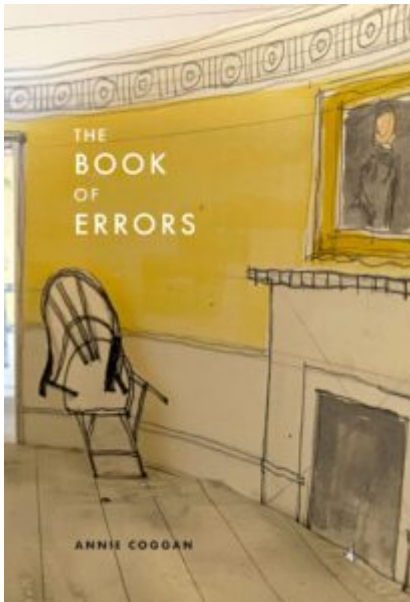
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

R. Eric Thomas didn't know he was different until the world told him so. Everywhere he went—whether it was his rich, mostly white, suburban high school, his conservative black church, or his Ivy League college in a big city—he found himself on the outside looking in.

In essays by turns hysterical and heartfelt, Thomas reexamines what it means to be an “other” through the lens of his own life experience. He explores the two worlds of his childhood: the barren urban landscape where his parents' house was an anomalous bright spot, and the Eden-like school they sent him to in white suburbia. He writes about struggling to reconcile his Christian identity with his sexuality, the exhaustion of code-switching in college, accidentally getting famous on the internet (for the wrong reason), and the surreal experience of covering the 2016 election for *Elle* online, and the seismic changes that came thereafter. Ultimately, Thomas seeks the answer to these ever more relevant questions: Is the future worth it? Why do we bother when everything seems to be getting worse? As the world continues to shift in unpredictable ways, Thomas finds the answers to these questions by reenvisioning what “normal” means and in the powerful alchemy that occurs when you at last place yourself at the center of your own story.

Here for It will resonate deeply and joyfully with everyone who has ever felt pushed to the margins, struggled with self-acceptance, or wished to shine more brightly in a dark world. Stay here for it—the future may surprise you.

83. *The Book of Errors* by Annie Coggan (A Public Space, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

The Book of Errors by Annie Coggan is the tale of three architects who shaped and altered the stories of three historic American structures—the Henry Knox Museum in Maine, Fraunces Tavern in New York City, and the Betsy Ross House in Philadelphia. The book takes its title from the preservation missteps and preconceptions of those involved. Through her renderings of imagined architectures, Annie Coggan considers how narratives of history are configured. The parallel stories by Mark Hage—entwining the factual and the imagined—frame and give form to these portraits, giving overall shape to the interaction of text and image. A collection of drawings, ephemera, and imaginings, *The Book of Errors* invites us to new possibilities that may or may not have happened, but that become stories of our mind, each in our unique way. With an introduction by Brigid Hughes.

84. *This Is All I Got: A New Mother's Search for Home* by Lauren Sandler (Random House, 2020)



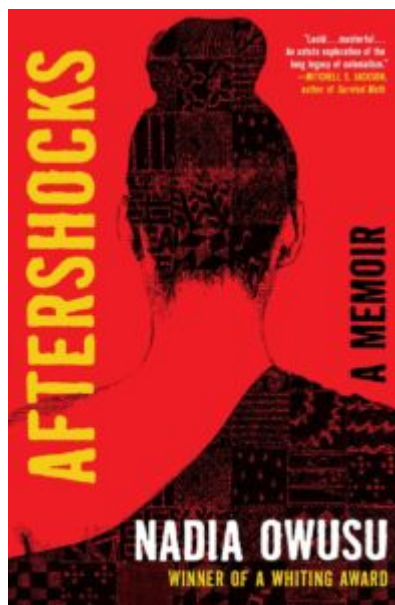
[Amazon](#)

Camila is twenty-two years old and a new mother. She has no family to rely on, no partner, and no home. Despite her intelligence and determination, the odds are firmly stacked against her. In this extraordinary work of literary reportage, Lauren Sandler chronicles a year in Camila's life—from the birth of her son to his first birthday—as she navigates the labyrinth of poverty and homelessness in New York City. In her attempts to secure a safe place to raise her son and find a measure of freedom in her life, Camila copes with dashed dreams, failed relationships, the desolation of abandonment, and miles of red tape with grit, humor, and uncanny resilience.

Every day, more than forty-five million Americans attempt to survive below the poverty line. Every night, nearly sixty thousand people sleep in New York City-run shelters, 40 percent of them children. In *This Is All I Got*, Sandler brings this deeply personal issue to life, vividly depicting one woman's hope and despair and her steadfast determination to change her life despite the myriad setbacks she encounters.

This Is All I Got is a rare feat of reporting and a dramatic story of survival. Sandler's candid and revealing account also exposes the murky boundaries between a journalist and her subject when it becomes impossible to remain a dispassionate observer. She has written a powerful and unforgettable indictment of a system that is often indifferent to the needs of those it serves, and that sometimes seems designed to fail.

85. *Aftershocks* by Nadia Owusu (Simon & Schuster, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Young Nadia Owusu followed her father, a United Nations official, from Europe to Africa and back again. Just as she and her family settled into a new home, her father would tell them it was time to say their goodbyes. The instability wrought by Nadia's nomadic childhood was deepened by family secrets and fractures, both lived and inherited. Her Armenian American mother, who abandoned Nadia when she was two, would periodically reappear, only to vanish again. Her father, a Ghanaian, the great hero of her life, died when she was

thirteen. After his passing, Nadia's stepmother weighed her down with a revelation that was either a bombshell secret or a lie, rife with shaming innuendo.

With these and other ruptures, Nadia arrived in New York as a young woman feeling stateless, motherless, and uncertain about her future, yet eager to find her own identity. What followed, however, were periods of depression in which she struggled to hold herself and her siblings together.

"A magnificent, complex assessment of selfhood and why it matters" (*Elle*), *Aftershocks* depicts the way she hauled herself from the wreckage of her life's perpetual quaking, the means by which she has finally come to understand that the only ground firm enough to count on is the one written into existence by her own hand.

"Full of narrative risk and untrammelled lyricism" (*The Washington Post*), *Aftershocks* joins the likes of *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* and William Styron's *Darkness Visible*, and does for race identity what Maggie Nelson does for gender identity in *The Argonauts*.

86. *Stages: On Dying, Working, and Feeling* by Rachel Kauder Balebuff (Thick Press, 2020)

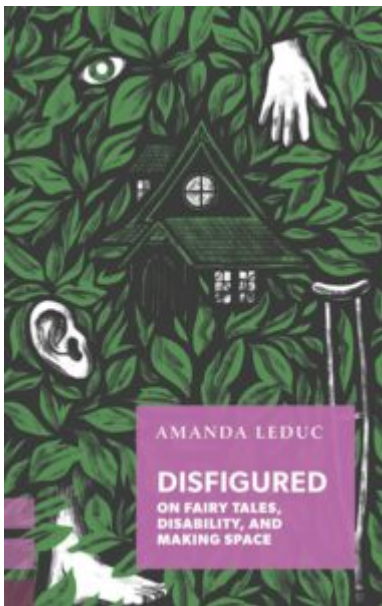


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

"STAGES is one of a very few recent books I have read that feels truly revolutionary, in both form and in content. It consists of documentary materials assembled, in a style somewhere between Svetlana Alexievich and André Breton, by a young writer, while staging a theater production in a nursing home. In a series of eye-opening interviews, she talks to housekeepers and nurses from Jamaica and Ghana about ghosts and family structure; to a clinical nutritionist, who explains how she helps people stop eating food, after a lifetime of eating food. Basically we're on a tour of a parallel institutionalized world of aging and dying which has been zealously cordoned off from the rest of American life, and which is not without its

Kafkaesque elements, but our guide, Rachel Kauder Nalebuff, is so humane, curious and visionary that the overall effect is energizing and uplifting. Reading STAGES gave me the revelatory feeling of looking at something I'd been dreading, and seeing that it was actually OK, and vital, and a major part of life. STAGES brings humanity, humor, and a strong visual sensibility to a taboo subject, with exhilarating results. It expanded the way I think about family, theater, and a 'good life.'"—Elif Batuman

87. *Disfigured: On Fairy Tales, Disability, and Making Space* by Amanda Leduc (Coach House Books, 2020)

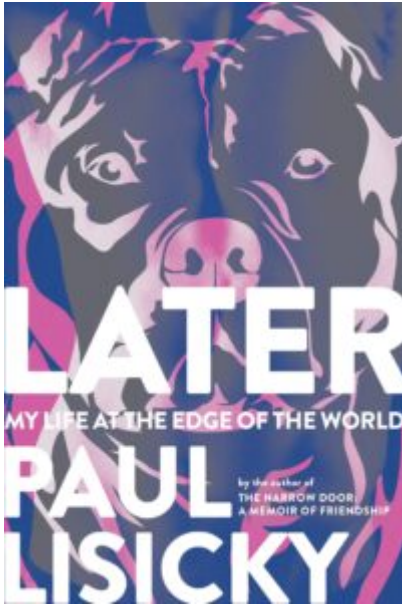


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

If every disabled character is mocked and mistreated, how does the Beast ever imagine a happily-ever-after? Amanda Leduc looks at fairy tales from the Brothers Grimm to Disney, showing us how they influence our expectations and behaviour and linking the quest for disability rights to new kinds of stories that celebrate difference.

"Leduc persuasively illustrates the power of stories to affect reality in this painstakingly researched and provocative study that invites us to consider our favorite folktales from another angle." —Sara Shreve, Library Journal

88. *Later: My Life At the Edge of the World* by Paul Lisicky (Graywolf Press, 2020)

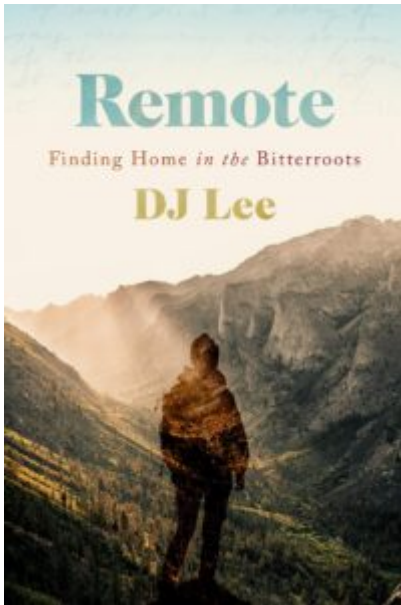


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

When Paul Lisicky arrived in Provincetown in the early 1990s, he was leaving behind a history of family trauma to live in a place outside of time, known for its values of inclusion, acceptance, and art. In this idyllic haven, Lisicky searches for love and connection and comes into his own as he finds a sense of belonging. At the same time, the center of this community is consumed by the AIDS crisis, and the very structure of town life is being rewired out of necessity: What might this utopia look like during a time of dystopia?

Later dramatizes a spectacular yet ravaged place and a unique era when more fully becoming one's self collided with the realization that ongoingness couldn't be taken for granted, and staying alive from moment to moment exacted absolute attention. Following the success of his acclaimed memoir, *The Narrow Door*, Lisicky fearlessly explores the body, queerness, love, illness, community, and belonging in this masterful, ingenious new book.

89. *Remote: Finding Home in the Bitterroots* by DJ Lee (OSU Press, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

When her friend vanishes in the vast Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness of Idaho and Montana, DJ Lee travels there to seek answers. The journey unexpectedly ends her fifteen-year quest to uncover her family's troubled history in this remote place. As she grapples with wild animal stand-offs, bush plane flights in dense fog, and strange characters who have come to the mountains to seek or hide, Lee learns how to embrace the land and her past. *Remote* is a compelling contribution to the growing body of literature on women and wilderness.

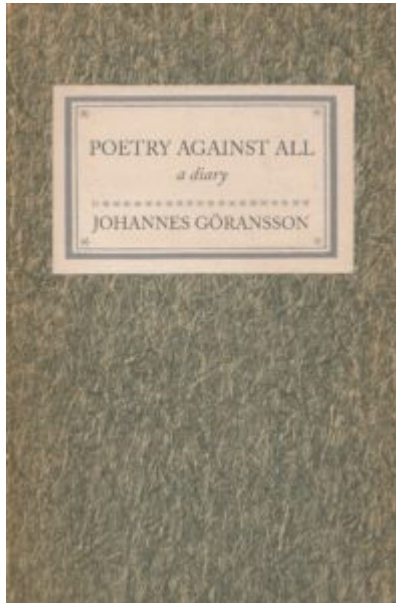
90. *The Spring* by Annie Connole (Chin Music Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Traversing the wild landscapes of the American West, prose and photography combine to create a lucid, dream-like vision of visitations and allegorical animal encounters with Snake, Owl, and Dragonfly, among others. *The Spring* tells a stirring, elegiac tale of death, love, rebirth, survival, and resilience.

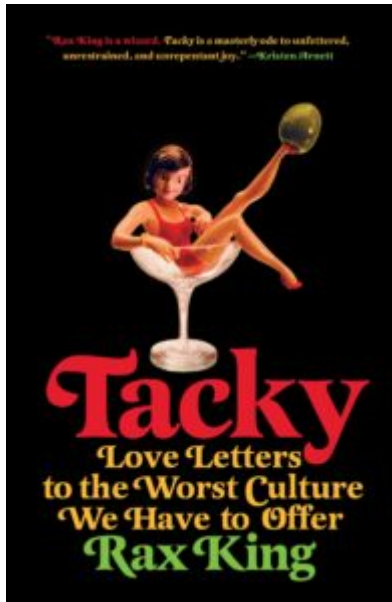
91. *Poetry Against All: A Diary* by Johannes Göransson (Tarpaulin Sky, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

“Moralists who find themselves clutching their pearls about this book of noir perversions should read less literally and see that Göransson’s POETRY AGAINST ALL—for all its anti-libidinous interrogations of pornography, the Holocaust, and cadavers—concerns some of the most relatably humanist emotions of all: grief, the meaning of home, and the protectiveness one has about one’s children. Göransson imagines pornography as the body at the edge of otherness, at once alluring and perverse, which is not unlike the lens through which he conceives his own role as immigrant, the contaminant in our body politic, alive to the sheer horror of America but never quite able to go home himself.”—Ken Chen

92. *Tacky: Love Letters to the Worst Culture We Have to Offer* by Rax King (Vintage, 2021)



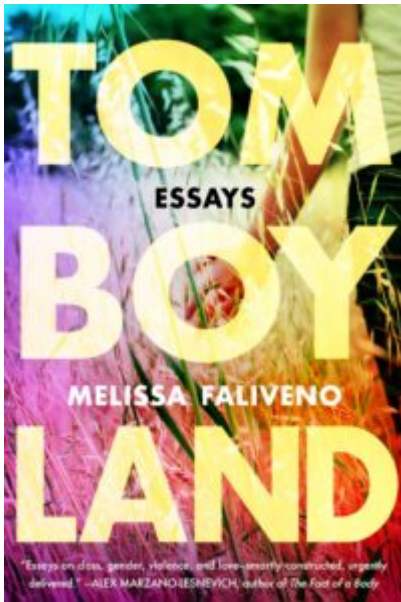
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Tacky is about the power of pop culture—like any art—to imprint itself on our lives and shape our experiences, no matter one’s commitment to “good” taste. These fourteen essays are a nostalgia-soaked antidote to the millennial generation’s obsession with irony, putting the aesthetics we hate to love—snakeskin pants, *Sex and the City*, Cheesecake Factory’s gargantuan menu—into kinder and sharper perspective.

Each essay revolves around a different maligned (and yet, Rax would argue, vital) cultural artifact, providing thoughtful, even romantic meditations on desire, love, and the power of nostalgia. An essay about the gym-tan-laundry exuberance of *Jersey Shore* morphs into an excavation of grief over the death of her father; in “You Wanna Be On Top,” Rax writes about friendship and early aughts girlhood; in another, Guy Fieri helps her heal from an abusive relationship.

The result is a collection that captures the personal and generational experience of finding joy in caring just a little too much with clarity, heartfelt honesty, and Rax King’s trademark humor.

93. *Tomboyland* by Melissa Faliveno (Tuttle Books / Little A, 2020)

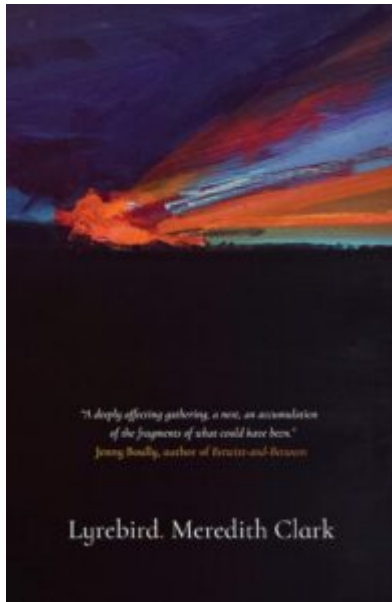


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Flyover country, the middle of nowhere, the space between the coasts. The American Midwest is a place beyond definition, whose very boundaries are a question. It's a place of rolling prairies and towering pines, where guns in bars and trucks on blocks are as much a part of the landscape as rivers and lakes and farms. Where girls are girls and boys are boys, where women are mothers and wives, where one is taught to work hard and live between the lines. But what happens when those lines become increasingly unclear? When a girl, like the land that raised her, finds herself neither here nor there?

In this intrepid collection of essays, Melissa Faliveno traverses the liminal spaces of her childhood in working-class Wisconsin and the paths she's traveled since, compelled by questions of girlhood and womanhood, queerness and class, and how the lands of our upbringing both define and complicate us even long after we've left. Part personal narrative, part cultural reportage, *Tomboyland* navigates midwestern traditions, mythologies, landscapes, and lives to explore the intersections of identity and place. From F5 tornadoes and fast-pitch softball to gun culture, strange glacial terrains, kink party potlucks, and the question of motherhood, Faliveno asks curious, honest, and often darkly funny questions about belonging and the body, isolation and community, and what we mean when we use words like *woman*, *family*, and *home*.

94. *Lyrebird* by Meredith Clark (Platypus Press, 2020)



[Amazon](#)

“Windows, mouths, buttonholes. Frames making use of an absence.” LYREBIRD is a story of loss, told in fragments. It is the documentation of a miscarriage and the chronicle of the dissolution of a relationship—a moving discovery on how it is possible to approach a thing with tenderness and still watch it break. In this short lyrical memoir, Meredith Clark delves into light, memory, and the crushing absence of things not yet known.

“LYREBIRD slowly circles its heartbreak through understatement, poetic revelation, imagistic accord. It admits to its shortcomings gracefully, knows there is no way to write what cannot be undone.”—Jenny Bouilly

95. *The Editor Function: Literary Publishing in Postwar America* by Abram Foley (University of Minnesota Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

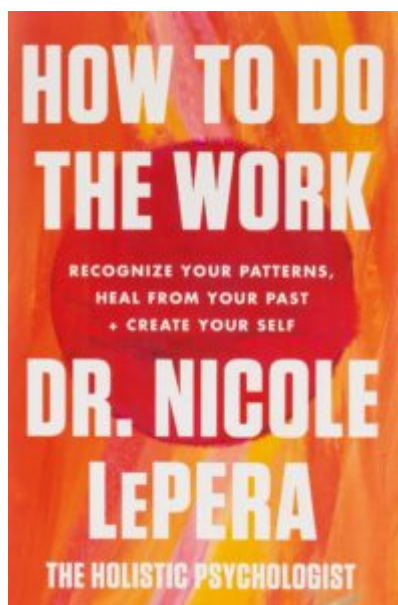
Michel Foucault famously theorized “the author function” in his 1969 essay “What Is an Author?” proposing that the existence of the author limits

textual meaning. Abram Foley shows a similar critique at work in the labor of several postwar editors who sought to question and undo the corporate “editorial/industrial complex.” Marking an end to the powerful trope of the editor as gatekeeper, *The Editor Function* demonstrates how practices of editing and publishing constitute their own kinds of thought, calling on us to rethink what we read and how.

The Editor Function follows avant-garde American literary editors and the publishing practices they developed to compete against the postwar corporate consolidation of the publishing industry. Foley studies editing and publishing through archival readings and small press and literary journal publishing lists as unique sites for literary inquiry. Pairing histories and analyses of well- and lesser-known figures and publishing formations, from Cid Corman’s *Origin* and Nathaniel Mackey’s *Hambone* to Dalkey Archive Press and Semiotext(e), Foley offers the first in-depth engagement with major publishing initiatives in the postwar United States.

The Editor Function proposes that from the seemingly mundane tasks of these editors—routine editorial correspondence, line editing, list formation—emerge visions of new, better worlds and new textual and conceptual spaces for collective action.

96. *How to Do the Work: Recognize Your Patterns, Heal from Your Past, and Create Your Self* by Dr. Nicole LePera (Harper Wave, 2021)



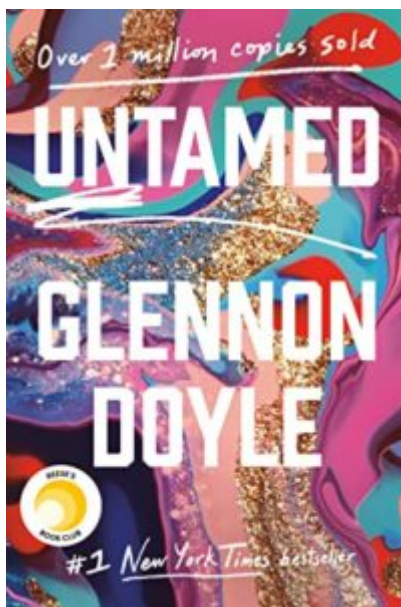
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

As a clinical psychologist, Dr. Nicole LePera often found herself frustrated by the limitations of traditional psychotherapy. Wanting more for her patients—and for herself—she began a journey to develop a united philosophy of mental, physical and spiritual wellness that equips people with the interdisciplinary tools necessary to heal themselves. After experiencing the life-changing results herself, she began to share what she’d learned with others—and soon “The Holistic Psychologist” was born.

Now, Dr. LePera is ready to share her much-requested protocol with the world. In *How to Do the Work*, she offers both a manifesto for SelfHealing as well as an essential guide to creating a more vibrant, authentic, and joyful life. Drawing on the latest research from a diversity of scientific fields and healing modalities, Dr. LePera helps us recognize how adverse experiences and trauma in childhood live with us, resulting in whole body dysfunction—activating harmful stress responses that keep us stuck engaging in patterns of codependency, emotional immaturity, and trauma bonds. Unless addressed, these self-sabotaging behaviors can quickly become cyclical, leaving people feeling unhappy, unfulfilled, and unwell.

In *How to Do the Work*, Dr. LePera offers readers the support and tools that will allow them to break free from destructive behaviors to reclaim and recreate their lives. Nothing short of a paradigm shift, this is a celebration of empowerment that will forever change the way we approach mental wellness and self-care.

97. *Untamed* by Glennon Doyle (The Dial Press, 2020)



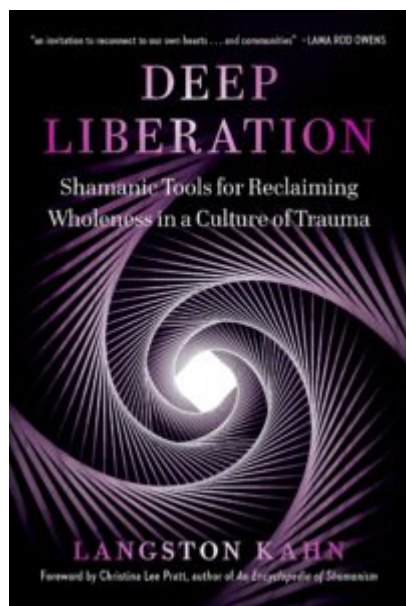
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

“Some books shake you by the shoulder while others steal your heart. In *Untamed*, Glennon does both at the exact same time.”—Brené Brown

“This memoir is so packed with incredible insight about what it means to be a woman today, what it means to be ‘good,’ and what women will do in order to be loved. I swear I highlighted something in EVERY chapter.”—Reese Witherspoon

“Doyle might just be the patron saint of female empowerment. . . . Here she inspires other women to listen to their intuition and break free of what cages them. . . . Her memoir has a message as clear as a ‘go’ signal: Find and honor your truest self.”—*People* (Book of the Week)

98. *Deep Liberation: Shamanic Tools for Reclaiming Wholeness in a Culture of Trauma* by Langston Kahn (North Atlantic Books, 2021)

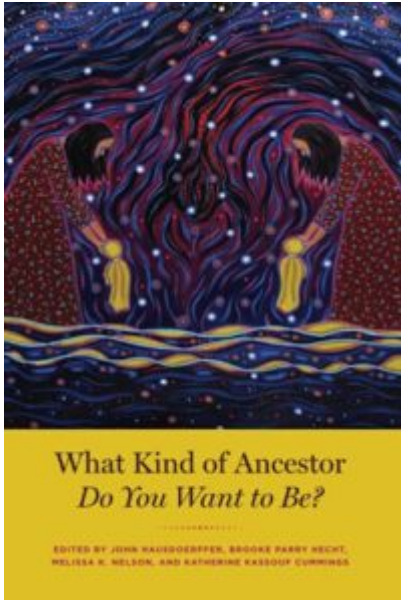


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

To create a world free from oppression, we each have to face the ways that we maintain toxic social systems within ourselves. In indigenous cultures throughout the world, it's understood that true transformation starts in the body with a change of heart.

Shamanic healer Langston Kahn offers the Deep Liberation Process, a body-based approach that allows us to radically transform the range of fear-based stories we each hold in ourselves: from traumatic experiences, internalized oppression, and habitual emotional patterns to the outmoded beliefs that hold us back from healing, transforming, and freeing our authenticity and unique genius. Bridging the shamanic wisdom of ancient spirituality with the needs and demands of modern-day life, Kahn offers concrete skills to cultivate deep grounding, skillful boundaries, and a healthy energy body; methods for authentic shadow work and healing our triggers; and tools for effectively tending personal and collective well-being in community.

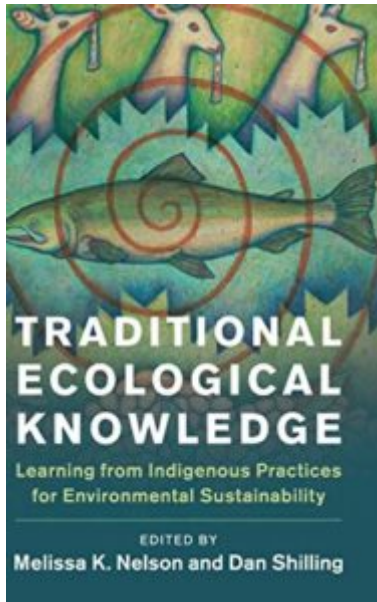
99. *What Kind of Ancestor Do You Want to Be?* Edited by John Hausdoerffer, Brooke Parry Hecht, Melissa K. Nelson, Katherine Kassouf Cummings (University of Chicago Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

As we face an ever-more-fragmented world, *What Kind of Ancestor Do You Want to Be?* demands a return to the force of lineage—to spiritual, social, and ecological connections across time. It sparks a myriad of ageless-yet-urgent questions: How will I be remembered? What traditions do I want to continue? What cycles do I want to break? What new systems do I want to initiate for those yet-to-be-born? How do we endure? Published in association with the Center for Humans and Nature and interweaving essays, interviews, and poetry, this book brings together a thoughtful community of Indigenous and other voices—including Linda Hogan, Wendell Berry, Winona LaDuke, Vandana Shiva, Robin Kimmerer, and Wes Jackson—to explore what we want to give to our descendants. It is an offering to teachers who have come before and to those who will follow, a tool for healing our relationships with ourselves, with each other, and with our most powerful ancestors—the lands and waters that give and sustain all life.

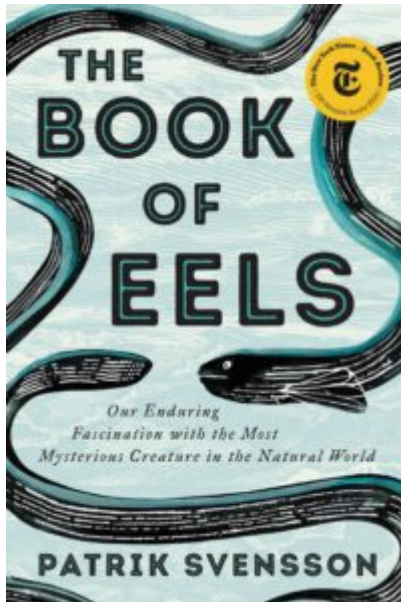
100. *Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Learning From Indigenous Practices for Environmental Sustainability*, Edited by Melissa K. Nelson, Dan Shilling (Cambridge University Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

This book examines the importance of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and how it can provide models for a time-tested form of sustainability needed in the world today. The essays, written by a team of scholars from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, explore TEK through compelling cases of environmental sustainability from multiple tribal and geographic locations in North America and beyond. Addressing the philosophical issues concerning indigenous and ecological knowledge production and maintenance, they focus on how environmental values and ethics are applied to the uses of land. Grounded in an understanding of the profound relationship between biological and cultural diversity, this book defines, interrogates, and problematizes, the many definitions of traditional ecological knowledge and sustainability. It includes a holistic and broad disciplinary approach to sustainability, including language, art, and ceremony, as critical ways to maintain healthy human-environment relations.

101. *The Book of Eels: Our Enduring Fascination With the Most Mysterious Creature in the Natural World* by Patrik Svensson (Ecco, 2020)



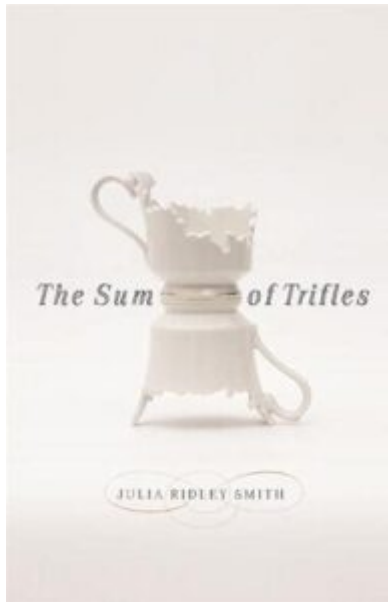
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Remarkably little is known about the European eel, *Anguilla anguilla*. So little, in fact, that scientists and philosophers have, for centuries, been obsessed with what has become known as the “eel question”: Where do eels come from? What are they? Are they fish or some other kind of creature altogether? Even today, in an age of advanced science, no one has ever seen eels mating or giving birth, and we still don’t understand what drives them, after living for decades in freshwater, to swim great distances back to the ocean at the end of their lives. They remain a mystery.

Drawing on a breadth of research about eels in literature, history, and modern marine biology, as well as his own experience fishing for eels with his father, Patrik Svensson crafts a mesmerizing portrait of an unusual, utterly misunderstood, and completely captivating animal. In *The Book of Eels*, we meet renowned historical thinkers, from Aristotle to Sigmund Freud to Rachel Carson, for whom the eel was a singular obsession. And we meet the scientists who spearheaded the search for the eel’s point of origin, including Danish marine biologist Johannes Schmidt, who led research efforts in the early twentieth century, catching thousands upon thousands of eels, in the hopes of proving their birthing grounds in the Sargasso Sea.

Blending memoir and nature writing at its best, Svensson’s journey to understand the eel becomes an exploration of the human condition that delves into overarching issues about our roots and destiny, both as humans and as animals, and, ultimately, how to handle the biggest question of all: death. The result is a gripping and slippery narrative that will surprise and enchant.

102. *The Sum of Trifles* by Julia Ridley Smith (University of Georgia Press, 2021)



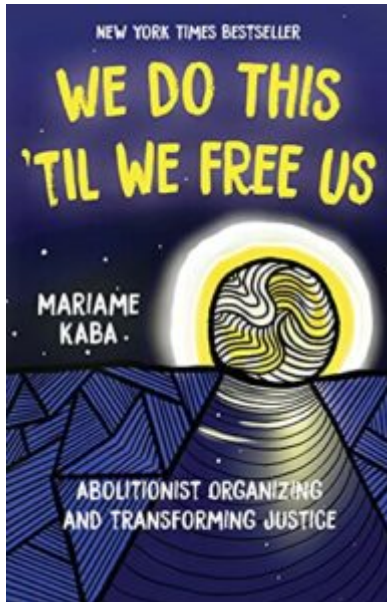
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

When Julia Ridley Smith's parents died, they left behind a virtual museum of furniture, books, art, and artifacts. Between the contents of their home, the stock from their North Carolina antiques shop, and the ephemera of two lives lived, Smith faced a monumental task. What would she do with her parents' possessions?

Smith's wise and moving memoir in essays, *The Sum of Trifles*, peels back the layers of meaning surrounding specific objects her parents owned, from an eighteenth-century miniature to her father's prosthetics. A vintage hi-fi provides a view of her often tense relationship with her father, whose love of jazz kindled her own artistic impulse. A Japanese screen embodies her mother's principles of good taste and good manners, while an antebellum quilt prompts Smith to grapple with her family's slaveholding legacy. Along the way, she turns to literature that illuminates how her inheritance shaped her notions of identity and purpose.

The Sum of Trifles offers up dark humor and raw feeling, mixed with an erudite streak. It's a curious, thoughtful look at how we live in and with our material culture and how we face our losses as we decide what to keep and what to let go.

103. *We Do This 'Til We Free Us: Abolitionist Organizing and Transforming Justice* by Mariame Kaba (Haymarket Books, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

“Organizing is both science and art. It is thinking through a vision, a strategy, and then figuring out who your targets are, always being concerned about power, always being concerned about how you’re going to actually build power in order to be able to push your issues, in order to be able to get the target to actually move in the way that you want to.”

What if social transformation and liberation isn’t about waiting for someone else to come along and save us? What if ordinary people have the power to collectively free ourselves? In this timely collection of essays and interviews, Mariame Kaba reflects on the deep work of abolition and transformative political struggle.

With a foreword by Naomi Murakawa and chapters on seeking justice beyond the punishment system, transforming how we deal with harm and accountability, and finding hope in collective struggle for abolition, Kaba’s work is deeply rooted in the relentless belief that we can fundamentally change the world. As Kaba writes, “Nothing that we do that is worthwhile is done alone.”

104. *Negative Space* by Lily Dancyger (Santa Fe Writer’s Project, 2021)

"Look lovely and heart-breaking too!"
—Karen Davis Skidmore



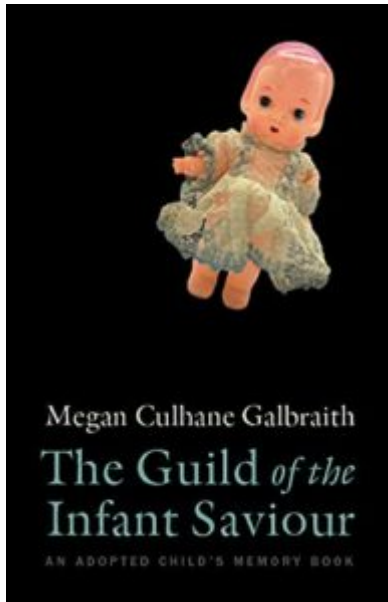
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Despite her parents' struggles with addiction, Lilly Dancyger always thought of her childhood as a happy one. But what happens when a journalist interrogates her own rosy memories to reveal the instability around the edges?

Dancyger's father, Joe Schactman, was part of the iconic 1980s East Village art scene. He created provocative sculptures out of found materials, and brought his young daughter into his gritty, iconoclastic world. She idolized him—despite the escalating heroin addiction that sometimes overshadowed his creative passion. When Schactman died suddenly, just as Dancyger was entering adolescence, she went into her own self-destructive spiral, raging against the world that had taken him away. But as an adult, Dancyger began to question the mythology she'd created about her father—the brilliant artist, struck down in his prime—using his paintings, sculptures, and prints as a guide to piece together a truer story.

Featuring Schactman's artwork throughout, *Negative Space* explores Dancyger's grief, anger, and artistic inheritance as she sets out to illuminate the darkness her father hid from her, as well as her own.

105. *Guild of the Infant Saviour* by Megan Culhane Galbraith (Mad Creek Books, 2021)

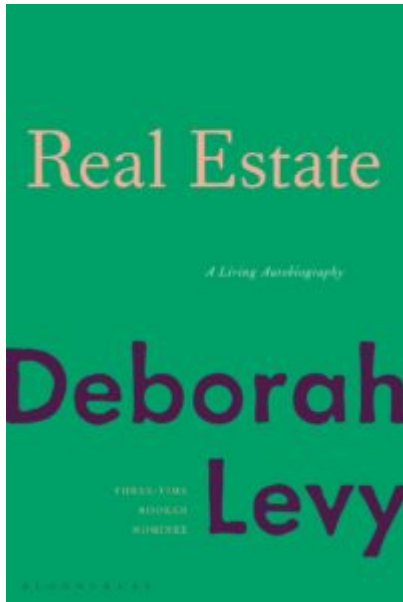


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Shortly before *Roe v. Wade* legalized abortion, adoptee Megan Culhane Galbraith was born in a Catholic charity hospital in New York City to a teenaged resident of the Guild of the Infant Saviour, a home for unwed mothers. Decades later, on the eve of becoming a mother herself, she would travel to the former guild site; to her birth mother's home in Scotland; and to Cornell University, where she discovered the startling history of its Domestic Economics program. There, from 1919 to 1969, coeds applied scientific principles to domesticity as they collectively mothered a rotating cast of babies awaiting adoption. The babies shared the last name Domecon and provided the inspiration for Galbraith's art project, *The Dollhouse*.

The Guild of the Infant Saviour is a dizzyingly inventive hybrid memoir of one adoptee's quest for her past. Galbraith pairs narrative with images from *The Dollhouse* as she weaves a personal and cultural history of adoption as it relates to guilt, shame, grief, identity, and memory itself. Ultimately, she connects her experiences to those of generations of adoptees, to the larger stories America tells about sex and motherhood, and to the shadows those stories cast on us all.

106. *Real Estate* by Deborah Levy (Bloomsbury, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

“Wonderful... Levy, whose prose is at once declarative and concrete and touched with an almost oracular pithiness, has a gift for imbuing ordinary observations with the magic of metaphor... the ordinary stuff of modern life, made radiant by Levy’s clarifying prose. But Levy never lets us lose sight of how extraordinary, both historically and personally, her casual, roving freedom truly is.” –*Alexandra Schwartz, The New Yorker*

“[Levy’s] writing is elliptical and episodic, as if tracing the movement of her mind. But it’s clearly crafted, with ideas recurring and expanding as the book goes on. And for all we see of her moving through the world and her work, her discussion of the places she writes and mentions of the machines she’s written on, she doesn’t portray herself in the act of writing. The book feels as if we’re listening in on her very thoughts, and yet those thoughts are composed off-screen.” –*Carolyn Kellogg, Boston Globe*

“Beautifully written ... A captivating journey to find a sense of place.”
–*Kirkus Reviews*

107. *Flee* by Calvin Walds (Split Lip Press, 2021)

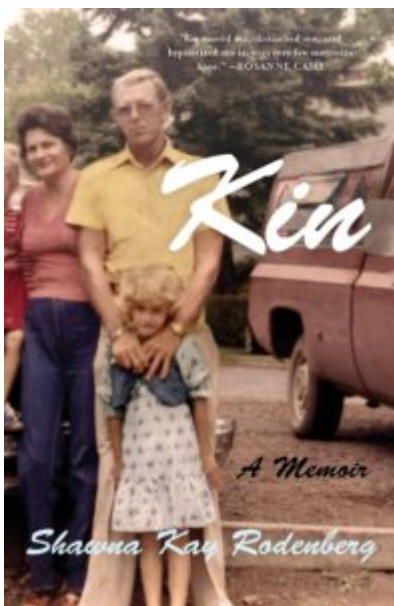


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Flee is on the move.

Flee is a mode of being and of making, one that moves from Detroit, to Paris, to Brooklyn, Hargeisa, and back, with a hybrid of warring energies– the lyrical, theoretical, political, and surreal–to innovate and interrogate both form and content in surpassing the actual. *Flee* seeks to find something else, maybe soft grass to lie on. With prose and photographs, *Flee* engages memories of travel in their physical, affective, and relational dimensions and reflects on Aaliyah, drones, Levinias, and Bushwick along the way. *Flee* is a chronicle and a poetics.

108. *Kin* by Shawna Kay Rodenberg (Bloomsbury, 2021)



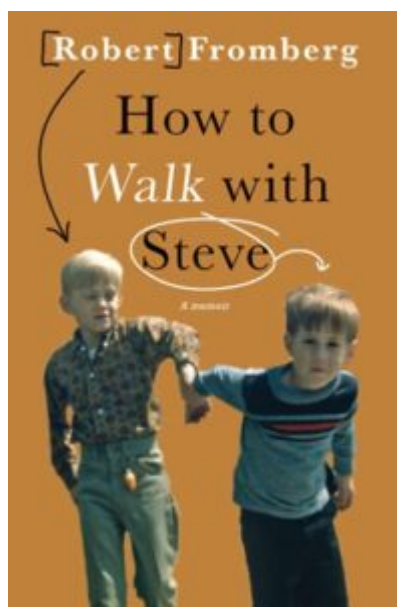
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

When Shawna Kay Rodenberg was four, her father, fresh from a ruinous tour in Vietnam, spirited her family from their home in the hills of Eastern Kentucky to Minnesota, renouncing all of their earthly possessions to live in the Body, an off-the-grid End Times religious community. Her father was seeking a

better, safer life for his family, but the austere communal living of prayer, bible study and strict regimentation was a bad fit for the precocious Shawna. Disciplined harshly for her many infractions, she was sexually abused by a predatory adult member of the community. Soon after the leader of the Body died and revelations of the sexual abuse came to light, her family returned to the same Kentucky mountains that their ancestors have called home for three hundred years. It is a community ravaged by the coal industry, but for all that, rich in humanity, beauty, and the complex knots of family love. Curious, resourceful, rebellious, Shawna ultimately leaves her mountain home but only as she masters a perilous balancing act between who she has been and who she will become.

Kin is a mesmerizing memoir of survival that seeks to understand and make peace with the people and places that were survived. It is above all about family-about the forgiveness and love within its bounds-and generations of Appalachians who have endured, harmed, and held each other through countless lifetimes of personal and regional tragedy.

109. *How to Walk With Steve* by Robert Fromberg (Latah Books, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

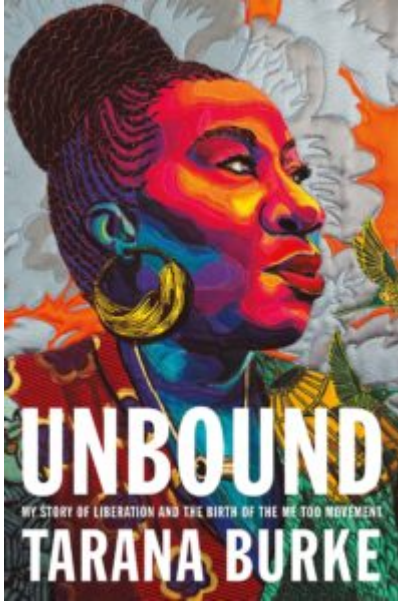
How to Walk with Steve is a memoir of a boy's connection with his autistic brother in a family defined by alcoholism, art, and death in a decaying Midwestern city.

With exposed-nerve scenes, Robert Fromberg immerses us in an early childhood made relentlessly unpredictable by autism and addiction; teenage years alone in 1970s New York City; and young adulthood as guardian of his brother after the death of their parents.

Robert Fromberg has published prose in *Indiana Review*, *Colorado Review*, *Hobart*, and many other journals. He graduated from the Warren Wilson College MFA Program for Writers and taught writing at Northwestern University for 17

years.

110. *Unbound: My Story of Liberation and the Me Too Movement* by Tarana Burke (Flatiron Books, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

“Searing. Powerful. Needed.” –Oprah

“Sometimes a single story can change the world. *Unbound* is one of those stories. Tarana’s words are a testimony to liberation and love.” –Brené Brown

From the founder and activist behind one of the largest movements of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the “me too” movement, Tarana Burke debuts a powerful memoir about her own journey to saying those two simple yet infinitely powerful words—me too—and how she brought empathy back to an entire generation in one of the largest cultural events in American history.

111. *Anything Will Be Easy After This: A Western Identity Crisis* by Bethany Malle (University of Nebraska Press, 2020)

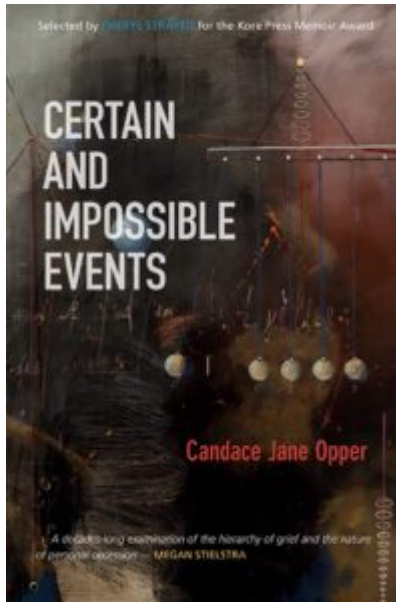


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Bethany Maile had a mythological American West in mind when she returned to Idaho after dropping out of college in Boston, only to find a farm-town-turned-suburb instead of the Wild West wonderland she remembered. Haunted by what she had so completely misremembered, Maile resolved to investigate her attachment to the western myth, however flawed.

Deciding to engage in a variety of “western” events, Maile trailed rodeo queens, bid on cattle, fired .22s at the gun range, and searched out wild horses. With lively reportage and a sharp wit, she recounts her efforts to understand how the western myth is outdated yet persistent while ultimately exploring the need for story and the risks inherent to that need. *Anything Will Be Easy after This* traces Maile’s evolution from a girl suckered by a busted-down story to a more knowing woman who discovers a new narrative that enchants without deluding.

112. *Certain and Impossible Events* by Candace Jane Opper (Kore Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

CERTAIN AND IMPOSSIBLE EVENTS begins in April 1994, with the suicide of a fourteen-year-old boy in a small New England town. The boy left behind no trail of warning signs and no suicide note, only a series of rumors that connected his actions to the suicide of Kurt Cobain, whose death had become international front-page news a week earlier.

Drawn to the hazy circumstances of her classmate's death, Candace Jane Opper embarks on an unsentimental investigation into the personal and cultural echo an individual suicide can produce. Fusing memoir with history and science, she gradually reveals the shape of suicide as it is handed down to us—from literature to YouTube, from middle school health class to sociological study, from the immutability of objects to the fluidity of oral history. In this stunning and candid epistolary essay, Opper invites readers into her decades-long obsession with a boy she barely knew, creating space for a kind of radical grief that exists outside the ordinary boundaries of mourning.

113. *Carry: A Memoir of Survival on Stolen Land* by Toni Jensen (Ballantine Books, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Toni Jensen grew up around guns: As a girl, she learned to shoot birds in rural Iowa with her father, a card-carrying member of the NRA. As an adult, she's had guns waved in her face near Standing Rock, and felt their silent threat on the concealed-carry campus where she teaches. And she has always known that in this she is not alone. As a Métis woman, she is no stranger to the violence enacted on the bodies of Indigenous women, on Indigenous land, and the ways it is hidden, ignored, forgotten.

In *Carry*, Jensen maps her personal experience onto the historical, exploring how history is lived in the body and redefining the language we use to speak about violence in America. In the title chapter, Jensen connects the trauma of school shootings with her own experiences of racism and sexual assault on college campuses. "The Worry Line" explores the gun and gang violence in her neighborhood the year her daughter was born. "At the Workshop" focuses on her graduate school years, during which a workshop classmate repeatedly killed off thinly veiled versions of her in his stories. In "Women in the Fracklands," Jensen takes the reader inside Standing Rock during the Dakota Access Pipeline protests and bears witness to the peril faced by women in regions overcome by the fracking boom.

114. *The Sprawl: Reconsidering the Weird American Suburbs* by Jason Diamond (Coffee House Press, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

For decades the suburbs have been where art happens despite: despite the conformity, the emptiness, the sameness. Time and again, the story is one of gems formed under pressure and that resentment of the suburbs is the key ingredient for creative transcendence. But what if, contrary to that, the suburb has actually been an incubator for distinctly American art, as positively and as surely as in any other cultural hothouse? Mixing personal experience, cultural reportage, and history while rejecting clichés and pieties and these essays stretch across the country in an effort to show that this uniquely American milieu deserves another look.

115. *Funeral For Flaca* by Emilly Prado (Future Tense Books, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

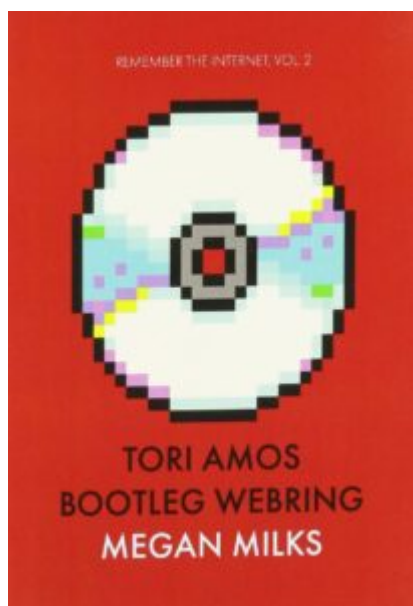
Emilly Prado retraces her experience coming of age as a prep-turned-chola-turned-punk in this collection that is one-part memoir-in-essays, and one-part playlist, zigzagging across genres and decades, much like the rapidly changing and varied tastes of her youth. Emilly spends the late 90's and

early aughts looking for acceptance as a young Chicana growing up in the mostly-white suburbs of the San Francisco Bay Area before moving to Portland, Oregon in 2008. *Ni de aquí, ni de allá*, she tries to find her place in the in between.

Growing up, the boys reject her, her father cheats on her mother, then the boys cheat on her and she cheats on them. At 21-years-old, Emily checks herself into a psychiatric ward after a mental breakdown. One year later, she becomes a survivor of sexual assault. A few years after that, she survives another attempted assault. She searches for the antidote that will cure her, cycling through love, heartbreak, sex, an eating disorder, alcohol, an ever-evolving style, and, of course, music.

She captures the painful reality of what it means to lose and find your identity, many times over again. For anyone who has ever lost their way as a child or as an adult, *Funeral for Flaca* unravels the complex layers of an unpredictable life, inviting us into an intimate and honest journey profoundly told with humor and heart by Emily Prado.

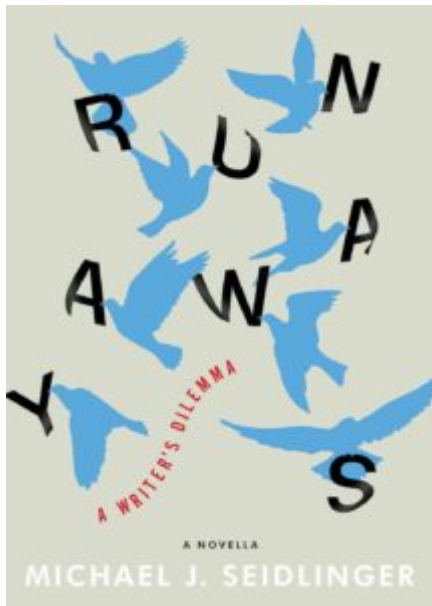
116. *Tori Amos Bootleg Webring* by Megan Milks (Instar Books, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

To be part of the most elite Tori Amos tape trading webring of 1998; you've got to be better than the best. This is how teenage Megan Milks sees it as they negotiate 2:1 trades of rare concert audio with some of the most intense Toriphiles the Internet has to offer—as well as navigate fandom friendships haunted with nascent queer meaning. In this new volume of REMEMBER THE INTERNET; Milks leads us through a world of concerts and USEnet meetups; a world just now inventing the rules for being with one another online: bring references; bring blanks.

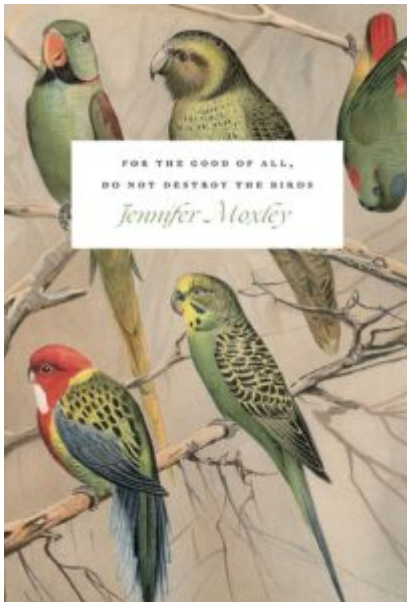
**117. *Runaways: A Writer's Dilemma* by Michael J. Seidlinger
(Future Tense Books, 2021)**



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

In *RUNAWAYS: A WRITER'S DILEMMA*, author Michael J. Seidlinger centers a magnifying glass on the creative journey, with an honest and unabashed search into how and why someone would want to be accepted as a writer in a world that might not care. The book's breezy narrative contrasts with the despair that is often triggered by the wasteland of social media and the Internet. This is a story that reminds the reader that they aren't alone in a culture that pressures us to measure our work on a purely capitalistic level, driven by likes, hearts, and money. Like a darker and more skewed literary version of the metaphysical classic, *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, Seidlinger's *RUNAWAYS: A WRITER'S DILEMMA* shows us how our art, often made in solitary, can be the more important and inspiring part of living.

**118. *For the Good of All, Do Not Destroy the Birds* by Jennifer Moxley
(Flood Editions, 2021)**

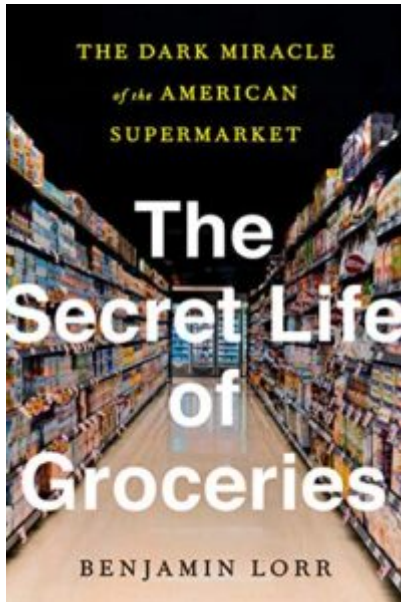


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

A blend of literary criticism and memoir, Jennifer Moxley's *FOR THE GOOD OF ALL, DO NOT DESTROY THE BIRDS* recounts a life spent in the company of birds and poems, intimately attuned to the mysteries of singing. These essays trace the poet's calling to sources in birdsong and sacrifice, asking, "Must a woman be sentenced to endless night for a poet to be born?" From the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice to the death of the poet's mother, Moxley explores the losses that underlie poetry, and in turn, poetry's use as a measure for living.

"FOR THE GOOD OF ALL, DO NOT DESTROY THE BIRDS opens a magical place of clean-lined prose, scholarly knowledge, and inspiration. The writing is deep and lucid, it cuts to the bone and yet respects the mystery of things. It works by a literary transfiguration. The poet shines with bright rays of thought and skill as she stands on a mount of experience created by the songs of poets and birds –from Sappho and Ovid to Robert Duncan and Anne Carson, from nightingales to lyrebirds –until they appear next to her and converse with her as she writes." –Robert Adamson

119. *The Secret Life of Groceries: The Dark Miracle of the American Supermarket* by Benjamin Lorr (Avery, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

"The Secret Life of Groceries reveals the unsustainable reality of American shopping...no reader of this ambitious book will enter a store the same."

–*San Francisco Chronicle*

"The Secret Life of Groceries is a deeply curious and evenhanded report on our national appetites."

–*The New York Times*

"The Secret Life of Groceries takes us on a tour through the lives that the food system touches so that we have clear eyes about the human and environmental cost of our demands. If we can stomach it."

–*The Washington Post*

120. *Dog Flowers* by Danielle Geller (One World, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

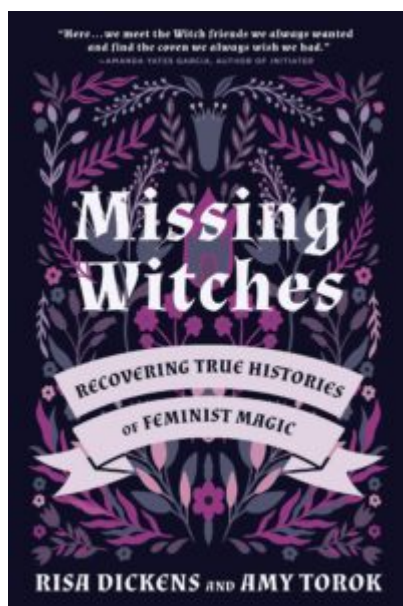
When Danielle Geller's mother dies of alcohol withdrawal during an attempt to

get sober, Geller returns to Florida and finds her mother's life packed into eight suitcases. Most were filled with clothes, except for the last one, which contained diaries, photos, and letters, a few undeveloped disposable cameras, dried sage, jewelry, and the bandana her mother wore on days she skipped a hair wash.

Geller, an archivist and a writer, uses these pieces of her mother's life to try and understand her mother's relationship to home, and their shared need to leave it. Geller embarks on a journey where she confronts her family's history and the decisions that she herself had been forced to make while growing up, a journey that will end at her mother's home: the Navajo reservation.

Dog Flowers is an arresting, photo-lingual memoir that masterfully weaves together images and text to examine mothers and mothering, sisters and caretaking, and colonized bodies. Exploring loss and inheritance, beauty and balance, Danielle Geller pays homage to our pasts, traditions, and heritage, to the families we are given and the families we choose.

121. *Missing Witches: Recovering True Histories of Feminist Magic* by Risa Dickens, Amy Torok (North Atlantic Books, 2021)



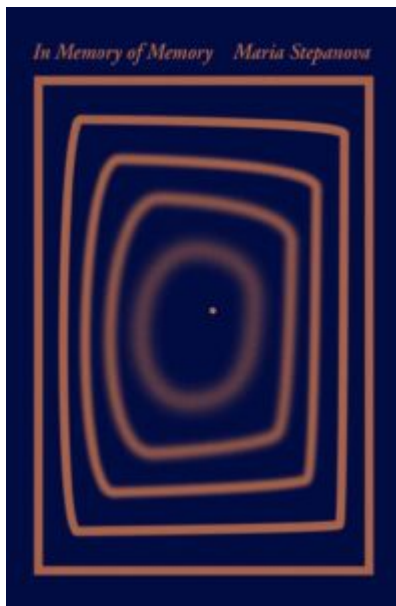
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

When you start looking for witches, you find them everywhere. As seekers and practitioners reclaim and restore magic to its rightful place among powerful forces for social, personal, and political transformation, more people than ever are claiming the identity of "Witch." But our knowledge of witchcraft and magic has been marred by erasure, sensationalism, and sterilization, the true stories of history's witches left untold.

Through meditations, stories, and practices, authors Risa Dickens and Amy Torok offer an intersectional, contemporary lens for uncovering and reconnecting with feminist witch history. Sharing traditions from all over the world—from Harlem to Haiti, Oaxaca to Mesopotamia—*Missing Witches*

introduces readers to figures like Monica Sjoo, HP Blavatsky, Maria Sabina, and Enheduanna, shedding light on their work and the cultural and sociopolitical contexts that shaped it. Structured around the 8 sabbats of the Wheel of the Year, each chapter includes illustrations by Amy Torok, as well as invocations, rituals, and offerings that incorporate the authors' own wisdom, histories, and journeys of trauma, loss, and empowerment. *Missing Witches* offers an inside look at the vital stories of women who have practiced—and lived—magic.

122. *In Memory of Memory* by Maria Stepanova, Translated by Sasha Dugdale (New Directions, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

“*In Memory of Memory* is a multi-faceted essay rooted in doubt on the nature of remembering.”

– *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*

“A brilliant evocation of the last years of the Soviet Union, extending deep into the past...A remarkable work of the imagination.”

– *Kirkus (starred review)*

“Stepanova’s finely crafted debut follows a woman’s lifelong efforts to better understand her ancestors, Russian Jews whose stories fascinated her as a child growing up in the Soviet Union...[an] admirable cross-genre project will intrigue fans of erudite autofiction.”

– *Publishers Weekly*

123. *No Planet B: A Teen Vogue Guide to the Climate Crisis* by Lucy Diavolo (Haymarket Books, 2021)

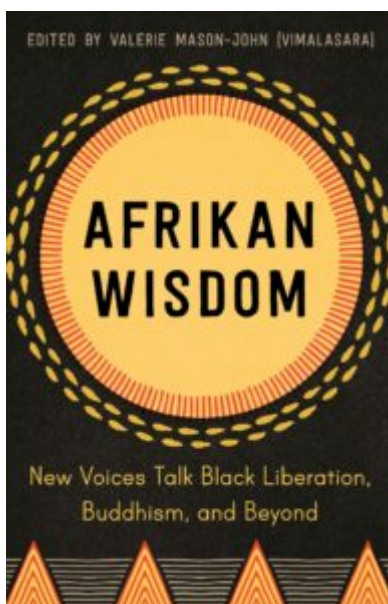


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

An urgent call for climate justice from Teen Vogue, one of this generation's leading voices, using an intersectional lens – with critical feminist, indigenous, antiracist and internationalist perspectives. As the political classes watch our world burn, a new movement of young people is rising to meet the challenge of climate catastrophe. This book is a guide, a toolkit, a warning and a cause for hope.

"I hope that this book embodies Teen Vogue's motto of making young people feel seen and heard all over the world. I hope that it forces their parents, communities, loved ones, friends, and—most importantly—those in power to see that the health of our planet depends on how quickly and drastically we change our behaviors. I hope it forces them all to respond." —From the foreword by Teen Vogue editor-in-chief, Lindsay Peoples Wagner

124. *Afrikan Wisdom: New Voices Talk Black Liberation, Buddhism, and Beyond*, Edited by Valerie Mason-John (North Atlantic Books, 2021)



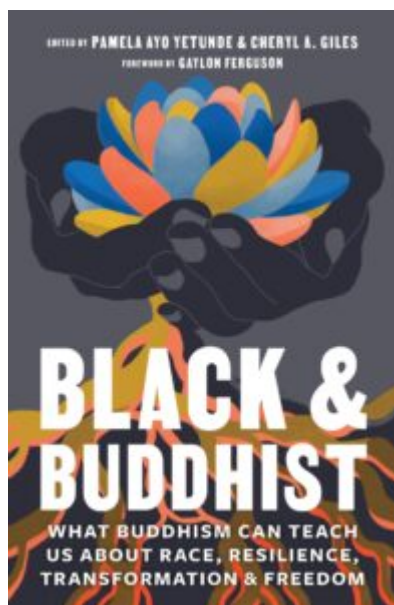
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

A spiritual, political, and interdisciplinary anthology of wisdom stories from Black liberation leaders and teachers.

Afrikan Wisdom represents an intersectional, cross-pollinated exploration of Black life—past, present, and future. Award-winning author and editor Valerie Mason-John (Vimalasara)'s collection of 34 essays—written by an eclectic and inspirational group of Black thought leaders and teachers—reflects on the unique and multilayered experience of being Black in the world today.

This anthology instills in readers the knowledge, awareness, validation, and spiritual tools necessary to nurture both individual and collective liberation. It is both an inspiration and a motivation for Black readers, as well as anyone else interested in reading about emerging spiritual voices.

125. *Black & Buddhist: What Buddhism Can Teach Us About Race, Resilience, Transformation, and Freedom*, Edited by Pamela Ayo Yetunde, Cheryl A. Giles (Shambhala, 2020)

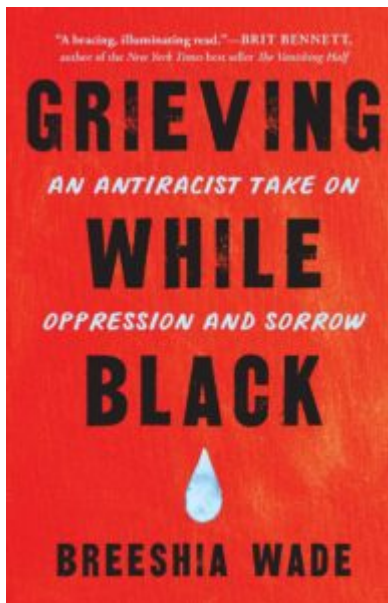


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

What does it mean to be Black and Buddhist? In this powerful collection of writings, African American teachers from all the major Buddhist traditions tell their stories of how race and Buddhist practice have intersected in their lives. The resulting explorations display not only the promise of Buddhist teachings to empower those facing racial discrimination but also the way that Black Buddhist voices are enriching the Dharma for all practitioners. As the first anthology comprised solely of writings by African-descended Buddhist practitioners, this book is an important contribution to the development of the Dharma in the West.

126. *Grieving While Black: An Antiracist Take on Oppression and*

Sorrow by Breeshia Wade (North Atlantic Books, 2021)

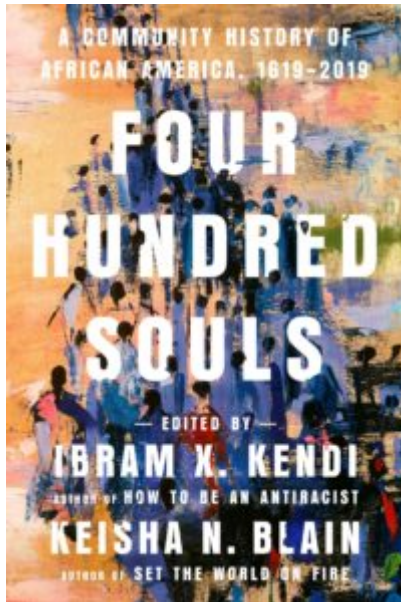


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Most of us understand grief as sorrow experienced after a loss—the death of a loved one, the end of a relationship, or a change in life circumstance. Breeshia Wade approaches grief as something that is bigger than what’s already happened to us—as something that is connected to what we fear, what we love, and what we aspire toward. Drawing on stories from her own life as a Black woman and from the people she has midwived through the end of life, she connects sorrow not only to specific incidents but also to the ongoing trauma that is part and parcel of systemic oppression.

Wade reimagines our relationship to power, accountability, and boundaries and points to the long-term work we must all do in order to address systemic trauma perpetuated within our interpersonal relationships. Each of us has a moral obligation to attend to our own grief so that we can responsibly engage with others. Wade elucidates grief in every aspect of our lives, providing a map back to ourselves and allowing the reader to heal their innate wholeness.

127. *Four Hundred Souls: A Community History of African America, 1619-2019*, Edited by Ibram X. Kendi, Keisha N. Blain (One World, 2021)

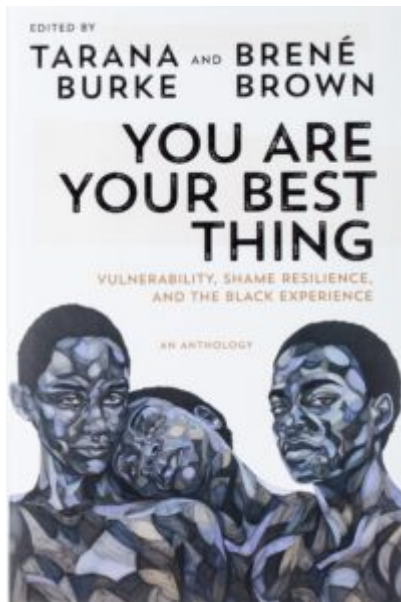


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Four Hundred Souls is a unique one-volume “community” history of African Americans. The editors, Ibram X. Kendi and Keisha N. Blain, have assembled ninety brilliant writers, each of whom takes on a five-year period of that four-hundred-year span. The writers explore their periods through a variety of techniques: historical essays, short stories, personal vignettes, and fiery polemics. They approach history from various perspectives: through the eyes of towering historical icons or the untold stories of ordinary people; through places, laws, and objects. While themes of resistance and struggle, of hope and reinvention, course through the book, this collection of diverse pieces from ninety different minds, reflecting ninety different perspectives, fundamentally deconstructs the idea that Africans in America are a monolith—instead it unlocks the startling range of experiences and ideas that have always existed within the community of Blackness.

This is a history that illuminates our past and gives us new ways of thinking about our future, written by the most vital and essential voices of our present.

128. *You Are Your Best Thing: Vulnerability, Shame, Resilience, and the Black Experience*, Edited by Tarana Burke, Brené Brown (Random House, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Tarana Burke and Dr. Brené Brown bring together a dynamic group of Black writers, organizers, artists, academics, and cultural figures to discuss the topics the two have dedicated their lives to understanding and teaching: vulnerability and shame resilience.

Contributions by Kiese Laymon, Imani Perry, Laverne Cox, Jason Reynolds, Austin Channing Brown, and more

129. *Kinship: Belonging in a World of Relations*, 5-Volume Set, Edited by Gavin Van Horn, Robin Wall Kimmerer, John Hausdoerffer (Center for Humans and Nature, 2021)



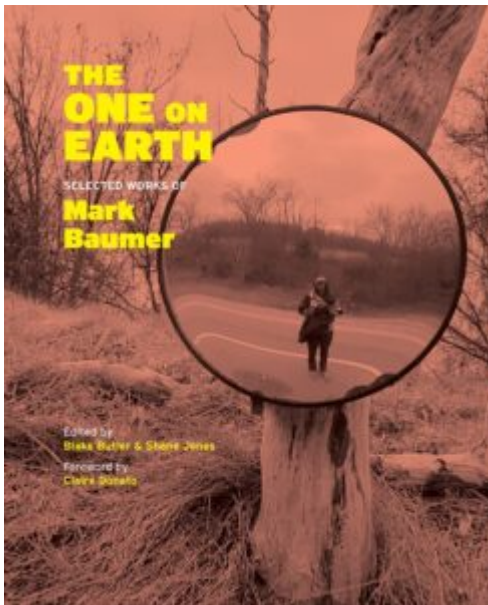
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

We live in an astounding world of relations. We share these ties that bind with our fellow humans—and we share these relations with nonhuman beings as well. From the bacterium swimming in your belly to the trees exhaling the breath you breathe, this community of life is our kin—and, for many cultures

around the world, being human is based upon this extended sense of kinship.

Kinship: Belonging in a World of Relations is a lively series that explores our deep interconnections with the living world. More than 70 contributors—including Robin Wall Kimmerer, Richard Powers, David Abram, J. Drew Lanham, and Sharon Blackie—invite readers into cosmologies, narratives, and everyday interactions that embrace a more-than-human world as worthy of our response and responsibility. These diverse voices render a wide range of possibilities for becoming better kin.

130. *The One On Earth: Selected Works of Mark Baumer*, Edited by Blake Butler, Shane Jones (FENCE, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Mark Baumer wrote like he was trying to have a consciousness, like he's trying to avoid feeling anything; then it's like he's working really hard to feel more. It's like he's a child of the internet plus Wendell Berry, an anti-folk folksy speaker navigating the industries of gigs and professional writing culture. Baumer's life was ended by an SUV in January of 2017 while he was walking barefoot across America for the second time to draw attention to climate change. Baumer was a prolific wizard of non sequitur and displacement, and these writings show the maturation of an absurdist conscience, applying itself to inequities of access: power, security, and meaning itself, within the confines of America and within that the contemporary professionalized writing culture.