

This Bookshelf: 2021 Books

Links to All Steve Hopkins' Bookshelves

Web Page

PDF/epub/Searchable

Link to Latest Book Reviews:

[Book Reviews Blog](#)

Links to Current Bookshelf:
Pending and Read

[2021 Books](#)

[2021 Books](#)

Links to 549 Books Read or
Skipped in 2020

[2020 Bookshelf](#)

[2020 Bookshelf](#)

Links to All Books from 1999
through 2020 Authors A-G

[All Books Authors A through
G](#)

[All Books Authors A through
G](#)

Links to All Books from 1999
through 2020 Authors H-M

[All Books Authors H
through M](#)

[All Books Authors H
through M](#)

Links to All Books from 1999
through 2020 Authors N-Z

[All Books Authors N through
Z](#)

[All Books Authors N through
Z](#)

Book of Books: An ebook of
books read, reviewed or
skipped from 1999 through
2020

Book of Books

This web page lists all books reviewed by Steve Hopkins at <http://bkrev.blogspot.com> during 2021 as well as books pending (The Shelf of Possibility) or relegated to the Shelf of Reproach or the Shelf of Ennui. You can click on the title of a book or on the picture of any jacket cover to jump to amazon.com where you can purchase a copy of any book on this shelf.

Key to Ratings:

*****	I love it
****	I like it
***	It's OK
**	I don't like it

*

I hate it

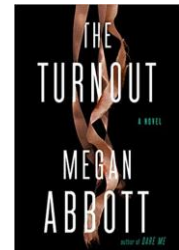
Title (Click on Link to purchase at amazon.com)	Author(s)	Rating	Blog Date	Comments	Click on Picture to Purchase at amazon.com
---	-----------	--------	-----------	----------	--

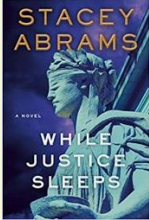
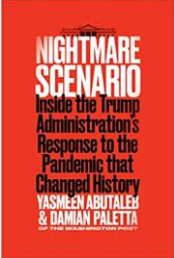
[The Turnout](#)

Abbott, Megan

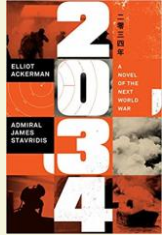
[12/13/21](#)

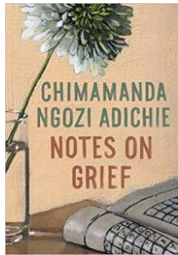
Ballet. In her novel titled, [The Turnout](#), Megan Abbott choreographs a complex story about three characters twirling around each other at the Durant School of Dance. Sisters Dara and Marie have danced forever at the ballet school founded by their mother, and prize student Charlie married Dara. The balance in their lives pirouettes out of control as the story develops. Readers who enjoy dark novels with interesting characters and complex plots are those most likely to enjoy this book.



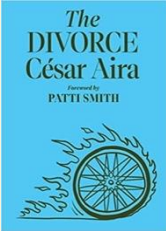
<u>While Justice Sleeps</u>	Abrams, Stacey	*****	<div data-bbox="934 462 1060 495">11/22/21</div> <p>Keene. Knowing how busy Stacey Abrams has been for years in her day jobs, I wasn't sure what to expect when I picked up her legal thriller titled, <u>While Justice Sleeps</u>. I was thoroughly entertained by the clever and engaging story, the fascinating characters led by protagonist Avery Keene, and the fine writing. Keene is a law clerk who finds herself appointed as legal guardian for her boss, Justice Howard Wynn who is in a coma. She learns that Wynn has been investigating a case and what he has learned is alarming. Keene must solve a complex puzzle while powerful people are rushing to carry out their plans. I still don't know how Abrams found the time to write to write this novel, but I'm happy she did. I was hooked and delighted by the story.</p>	
<u>Nightmare Scenario: Inside the Trump Administration's Response to the Pandemic That Changed History</u>	Abutaleb, Yasmeem and Damian Paletta	*****	<div data-bbox="934 1136 1060 1169">7/22/21</div> <p>Infighting. If someone you loved died of covid-19, take a pass on reading a book by journalists Yasmeem Abutaleb and Damian Paletta titled, <u>Nightmare Scenario: Inside the Trump Administration's Response to the Pandemic That Changed History</u>. Your heart will be broken again when you read about chaos, incompetence and infighting as the Trump administration responded to the pandemic. For readers interested in public policy, reading almost five hundred pages on this subject will involve reliving a recent experience with the guidance of journalists. This is the story of a tragedy in how a crisis was mismanaged. Despite my focus on what failed as described in this book, it's fair to say that the authors also</p>	


call attention to good things that were done. The running count of deaths as time went on overshadowed what good steps were taken in response to the virus.

<p><u>2034: A Novel of the Next World War</u></p>	<p>Ackerman, Elliot and James Stavridis</p>	<p>*****</p>	<p><u>4/22/21</u></p> <p>Realignment. Many of us have the tendency to think that the way things are now will continue into the foreseeable future. In their novel titled, <u>2034: A Novel of the Next World War</u>, former military officers Elliot Ackerman and James Stavridis present a plausible realignment of the world order in the relatively near future. We often read fiction for a good story about people we recognize as fully human. The authors provide readers of this novel with a cast of compelling characters from multiple countrysaaies. Each main character is called upon to play a role or complete a mission, and through luck or fate they take actions that forward the strategic interests of their respective countries. Ackerman and Stavridis capture the individual and collective vulnerability we face and prompt readers to consider how likely it is for their fictional tale to become true.</p>	
---	---	--------------	--	---

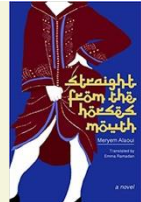
<p><u>Notes on Grief</u></p>	<p>Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi</p>	<p>*****</p>	<p><u>6/8/21</u></p> <p>Visceral. Wracked with grief following the death of her father in 2020, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie wrote a book titled, <u>Notes on Grief</u>, about her personal experience and as a loving tribute to her father. Through her fine writing, we participate in the visceral aspects of grief and want to howl with her at the great loss. Her words expose our own grief as well. During the past two years millions of people have experienced forms of</p>	
------------------------------	----------------------------------	--------------	--	---

pandemic grief as our world changed unexpectedly. Our connections to each other can become stronger in the context of grief, and this finely written book will connect deeply with every reader with a grief story of our own.

<u>The Divorce</u>	Aira, César	****	<u>11/16/21</u>	<p>Imagination. If I were forced to place César Aira's book titled, <u>The Divorce</u>, into a category, I would create a new one for this author's imagination and skill: post-magic realism. Within the course of a few pages, we move from one coincidence to another. We think we can separate imagination from reality, and then realize we can't. When we're sure we are hearing a mundane story, something magical seeps in. Aira moves readers along as fast as we can read, taking us tighter and tighter into his imagination. This book is short enough to read a second time for a different take, but trust me, multiple readings may not lead to greater understanding, just more questions.</p>	
------------------------------------	-------------	------	---------------------------------	---	---

<u>Leave the World Behind</u>	Alam, Rumaan	*****	<u>1/16/21</u>	<p>Safety. One of the reminders we all received as we opened the gift of the pandemic is that life can change in an instant. Rumaan Alam offers readers a finely written novel titled, <u>Leave the World Behind</u>, that places characters into a setting of uncertainty in which they face a world that has changed. A couple and their two children rented a rural house for a week's vacation away from New York City. The owners show up at the house late at night and ask if they can stay there because something caused a massive blackout in the city. Alam explores the ways in which</p>	
---	--------------	-------	--------------------------------	--	---

we respond to shock and change, and what creates a sense of safety or threat for us. Readers find themselves in the middle of issues of race, class, privilege and ambiguity. Perhaps all we desire is to survive whatever comes at us so we can live for another day.

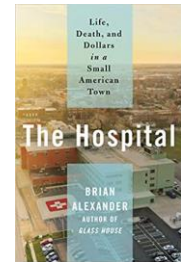
<u>Straight from the Horse's Mouth</u>	Alaoui, Meryem	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
--	----------------	--------	--	----------------------	---

[The Hospital: Life, Death, and Dollars in a Small American Town](#)

Alexander, Brian

[5/14/21](#)

Sick. Few Americans love our healthcare system. Readers of Brian Alexander's book titled, [The Hospital: Life, Death, and Dollars in a Small American Town](#), will feel sick about the situation he describes. Rather than taking a policy approach to examining healthcare, Alexander focuses on one town, Bryan, Ohio, its local hospital, and a handful of people in the community. I finished this book with a deeper understanding of what's broken in our healthcare system, and how the incentives for change are misguided. Most readers will feel deeply for the personal stories in this book, and the plight of all the characters involved. Through understanding some of the root causes of our current situation, we should be able to work toward good solutions for the benefit of all.



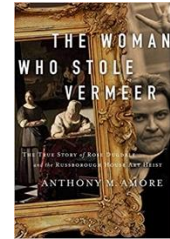
<u>White House, Inc.: How Donald Trump Turned the Presidency into a Business</u>	Alexander, Dan	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
<u>His Very Best: Jimmy Carter, a Life</u>	Alter, Jonathan	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
<u>A Man Named Doll</u>	Ames, Jonathan	*****	<u>5/14/21</u>	<p>Kidney. The test for whether crime fiction will appeal to readers often involves whether the protagonist comes across as authentic and interesting. In his novel titled, <u>A Man Named Doll</u>, Jonathan Ames introduces readers to Happy Doll, a Los Angeles private detective who prefers to be called, “Hank.” Ames passed the character test for me because I came to really like Hank, a former cop who loves his dog and shleps from one predicament to another. Queasy readers will find some gruesome violence here, and it’s not too much of a plot spoiler to say that Hank loses a kidney in a nefarious scheme in this novel. There’s a sense that most of life for Hank is a close-run thing, and somehow or other, he’s likely to come through. A series featuring Hank is off to a great start with this novel.</p>	

The Woman Who Stole Vermeer: The True Story of Rose Dugdale and the Russborough House Art Heist

Amore, Anthony M.

5/14/21

Revolutionary. Readers who enjoy true crime stories are those most likely to enjoy Anthony Amore's book titled, The Woman Who Stole Vermeer: The True Story of Rose Dugdale and the Russborough House Art Heist. Rose Dugdale grew up in an affluent family, obtained an Oxford doctorate, and embraced the Irish Republican cause, whether the IRA liked her actions or not. Amore proposes that her education gave her the ability to be selective in stealing the right artworks and that she is the most probable thief of two works by Vermeer. While the main perspective of this book involves Rose's skill as an art thief, there's also a more complete presentation of her life, and that offers readers insight into a formidable woman who committed her life to the pursuit of causes in which she believed.

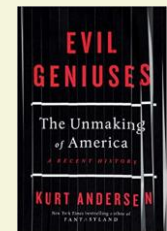


Evil Geniuses: The Unmaking of America

Andersen, Kurt

8/26/21

Patience. Most Americans focus on family and work and assume that our elected officials and business leaders look out for the interests of the whole country in performing their managerial roles. Meanwhile some Americans have played a long game in shifting the playing field in favor of a few over the many. That's the analysis Kurt Andersen provides in his book titled, Evil Geniuses: The Unmaking of America. A variety of patient operatives in business, government, law, and academics have nudged changes in public policy in ways that improve outcomes for a few and have placed heavy burdens on middle class workers whose relative incomes have been frozen for a long time.



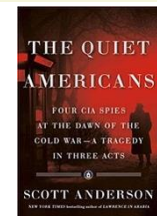
			Andersen connects dots from about 1970 to the present to show the gradual transformation of American life by patient oligarchs. Beneficiaries of this shift of wealth away from workers and toward owners may not like the messages in this book, but those readers concerned about the decline of the middle class will come away from this book with an understanding of how this has been accomplished so far and what might be done to turn the situation around.	
--	--	--	---	--

The Quiet Americans: Four CIA Spies at the Dawn of the Cold War--a Tragedy in Three Acts

Anderson, Scott

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.



<u>Who is Maud Dixon?</u>	Andrews, Alexandra	****	<u>11/22/21</u> Schemes. I was truly surprised by some twists in Alexandra Andrews' debut novel titled, <u>Who is Maud Dixon?</u> . The plot is engaging, the characters complex and well-developed, and the prose well written. The schemes of the characters are delicious to watch as they unfold, and the dark comedy is entertaining. The pace moves fast, and the clever writing offers frequent rewards to readers as we race to the end of the novel.	
---------------------------	--------------------	------	---	--

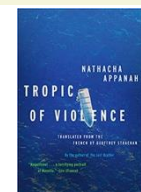


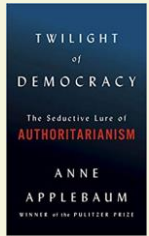

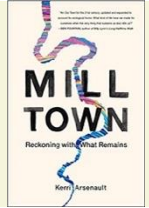
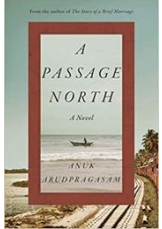
Tropic of Violence

Appanah, Natacha


Unread

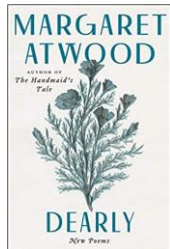
Shelf of Ennui 2021.



<u>Twilight of Democracy: The Seductive Lure of Authoritarianism</u>	Applebaum, Anne	*****	<u>10/25/21</u>	<p>Vulnerability. The more pages I turned while reading Anne Applebaum's finely written book titled, <u>Twilight of Democracy: The Seductive Lure of Authoritarianism</u>, the more I felt vulnerable to trends taking place around the world. As a historian, Applebaum offers historical perspective and insight. As a journalist, she presents an engaging narrative. As a human, she includes her own experience in recent decades as an illustration of the changes she has observed, and the friends lost as a focus on identity led to realignment of alliances. Readers interested in public policy are those most likely to enjoy this captivating book.</p>	
<u>Looking for Eliza</u>	Arbuthnot, Leaf	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
<u>Mill Town: Reckoning with What Remains</u>	Arsenault, Kerri	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
<u>A Passage North</u>	Arudpragasam, Anuk	*****	<u>12/6/21</u>	<p>Trauma. In his novel titled, <u>A Passage North</u>, Anuk Arudpragasam explores life in Sri Lanka after three decades of civil war. Through finely written prose we are absorbed into the atmosphere of the setting, influenced by the trauma and suffering of the characters, and see everyday life transformed. One aspect of this novel comes across as a love song to people and places, while another reveals</p>	

grief for what those people and places have experienced.

Black Buck	Askaripour, Mateo	*****	1/26/21	<p>Selling. Mateo Askaripour's debut novel titled, Black Buck, skewers startups, racism, the sales process, and workplace life. The novel is structured as a sales manual and offers pretty good advice about selling. I expect that Black readers will guffaw at the multiple scenes in which protagonist Darren as the only Black employee at Sumwun gets told regularly that he resembles some Black celebrity, a different one every time. Askaripour speeds us through Darren's transformation into a highly successful salesman, and the changes to his character as this happens. We never get the chance to relax while reading this novel, as we shift from a dramatic scene to a selling takeaway. A section that begins with tranquility ends with violence. Kindness turns to cruelty. White supremacy exercises power as a dish best served cold. I loved every page of this roller coaster of a book.</p>	
----------------------------	-------------------	-------	-------------------------	--	---

Dearly	Atwood, Margaret	*****	4/13/21	<p>Focus. I reflected not long ago that I wasn't reading as much poetry as I'd like, so considering that April is National Poetry Month, I increased my focus. One of the collections I loved is by Margaret Atwood and is titled, Dearly. The wide range of themes in this collection demanded that I read one poem per sitting, and that worked just fine. It allowed me time to read the same poem two or three times and then think about it before reading another. I will not stake a position on how Atwood's poetry compares with her longer fiction. I</p>	
------------------------	------------------	-------	-------------------------	--	---

will say with clarity that these poems are a delight and should satisfy every reader who enjoys contemporary poetry. Atwood is a close observer of us and our world, and her focus in these poems captures what is important and essential in who and where we are.

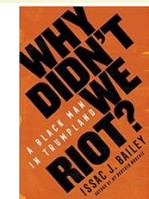
<u>The Push</u>	Audrain, Ashley	*****	<u>9/8/21</u>	<p>Chilling. What does a parent do if your child is a psychopath? Ashley Audrain's novel titled, <u>The Push</u>, gives readers the opportunity to think about that question. Not long after giving birth to daughter, Violet, protagonist Blythe Connor begins to think there is something wrong. Blythe's husband, Fox, denies and dismisses her fears and concerns. Readers are left to gape in horror at the consequences of not taking Blythe's concerns seriously. Audrain captures the overwhelming sorrow that enfolds Blythe as this chilling novel observes Violet's actions that fulfill her mother's greatest fears. Parents who read this novel will hug their children longer than usual as a way of thanking them for not being like Violet.</p>	
---------------------------------	-----------------	-------	-------------------------------	--	---

[Why Didn't We Riot? A Black Man in Trumpland](#)

Bailey, Isaac

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.



[Baseless: My Search for Secrets in the Ruins of the Freedom of Information Act](#)

Baker, Nicholson

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.

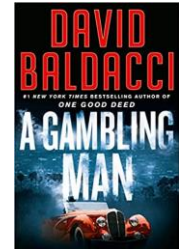


[A Gambling Man](#)

Baldacci, David

[5/6/21](#)

Fortune. The second novel by David Baldacci featuring Aloysius Archer is titled, [A Gambling Man](#). After the first episode left Archer in peril, he heads West in hopes of become an apprentice to a private detective in Bay Town, California. A stop in Reno brought him good luck, a large bundle of cash, a rare 1939 Delahaye convertible, and the companionship of Liberty Callahan, a talented actress who wants to make it big in Hollywood. Action in Bay Town is stimulating and perilous, and Archer and Liberty make a great team. Readers need not have read the debut in this series to enjoy this installment, but one's understanding of Archer's character is enhanced if one reads from the beginning.

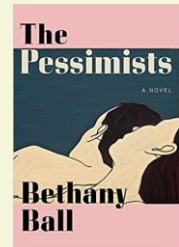


[The Pessimists](#)

Ball, Bethany

[12/18/21](#)

Community. The suburbia setting in Bethany Ball's novel titled, [The Pessimists](#), bears little surface resemblance to the world that John Updike mined so often. On closer examination, we do find the banality, white privilege, and moral decline that Updike dissected. Readers with experience of certain expensive private schools will love Ball's creation of Petra School. The cast of characters present themselves on one level to their community, but beneath that presentation there is something far more interesting. Ball cultivates this landscape with great wit and skill, and fans of fine writing will find a lot to enjoy in this novel.

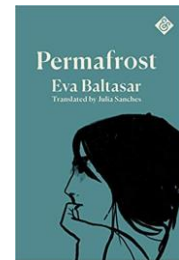


Permafrost

Baltasar, Eva

9/8/21

Poetic. The language and images in Eva Baltasar's debut novel titled, Permafrost, are poetic and lucid. The narrator observes the world and expresses her desires with clarity. Readers find an inner life that contrasts with that self she presents to the world. We feel the protagonist speaks to us with raw honesty and that's something of a privilege for us to savor, and to stimulate the desire in us to know more.

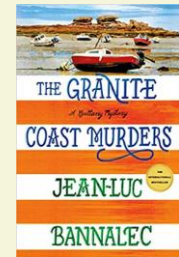


The Granite Coast Murders

Bannalec, Jean-Luc

6/8/21

Busman. The setting of the sixth installment of Jean-Luc Bannalec's mystery series featuring Commissaire Georges Dupin, is a two-week beach vacation for Georges and Claire, a novel titled, The Granite Coast Murders. While it appears that Claire has disengaged from her medical practice during their holiday, Georges begins a clandestine investigation of a local murder. While Georges has been warned before about detecting outside his jurisdiction, he can't stand inactivity, and prefers a busman's holiday to lying on a beach towel. Some readers will salivate at the descriptions of some of the meals that Georges and Claire enjoy. Mystery fans will love the intricate plot. Fans of this series will enjoy the return of familiar characters.



April in Spain


Banville, John

12/18/21

Recognition. For the eighth installment in his Quirke series of crime novels, a book titled, April in Spain, John Banville has abandoned pseudonym, Benjamin Black. Perhaps Banville recognized what many readers concluded long ago: the difference between literary fiction and popular fiction is artificial and unnecessary. While on holiday with his wife in Spain, on the coast



<u>That Old Country Music</u>	Barry, Kevin	****	<u>12/6/21</u>	<p>of San Sebastian, Quirke recognizes a woman who couldn't be there because she was murdered years earlier. What follows is an engaging and exciting story that fans of this author by whatever name and of this series will appreciate.</p> <p>Characters. I enjoyed reading Kevin Barry's short story collection titled, <u>That Old Country Music</u>, for two reasons. First, Barry's prose uses finely crafted language and when there's dialogue, it always suits the character and situation, thereby bringing the story to life. Second, within the efficient structure of the short story, Barry finds ways to present complex and interesting characters, full of the nuance and inconsistency we find in people we know.</p>	
<u>The 22 Murders of Madison May</u>	Barry, Max	*****	<u>8/19/21</u>	<p>Multiverse. I thoroughly enjoyed Max Barry's exploration of the multiverse in his novel titled, <u>The 22 Murders of Madison May</u>. We follow the same cast of characters in slightly altered universes in which the same dynamics play out multiple times. Readers already know that character Madison May is murdered multiple times. Journalist Felicity Staples becomes caught up in a crime story and then tries to stop the recurring psychopath from killing May. The small details about the alterations that Felicity finds as she enters a different world add to the richness of the story. What could have become repetitive turns out to be richer with each version. Fans of thrillers who can tolerate some science fiction components are those readers most likely to enjoy this entertaining novel.</p>	

<u>Exit</u>	Bauer, Belinda	****	4/27/21	<p>Schemes. Fans of crime fiction are those readers most likely to enjoy Belinda Bauer's novel titled, <u>Exit</u>. Protagonist Felix Pink is a retired widower who volunteers as an Exiteer, someone who accompanies a terminally ill person exercising their right to die. The role of the Exiteer is to be present and not to assist the patient. After Felix and a new volunteer arrive as scheduled to be present for a planned death, a mistake is made, and the bulk of the novel's plot drives from that error. The prose is well written, the characters are finely drawn, and the plot twists very satisfying.</p>	
-------------	----------------	------	---------	---	---


The Illness Lesson

Beams, Claire

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.



<u>Festival Days</u>	Beard, Jo Ann	*****	10/8/21	<p>Luminous. Readers who appreciate outstanding writing are those most likely to enjoy the nine pieces in Jo Ann Beard's collection titled, <u>Festival Days</u>. The depth of character development leads to insight about human behavior and highlights the complexity of our interior lives. Beard's descriptions shine light on what's often hidden in what we fail to observe. Thanks to her writing, the world become luminous. Finally, I thought the ways in which Beard reveals and constrains the emotions of her characters enhanced the depth of her insight and our enlightenment after reading these stories.</p>	
----------------------	---------------	-------	---------	--	---

Cuyahoga

Beatty, Pete

12/13/21

Spectacle. Have you ever wondered what the place where you live was like when people first settled there? In his larger-than-life story of the origins of Cleveland, Ohio, a novel titled, Cuyahoga, Pete Beatty presents a rowdy spectacle on which contemporary readers can gaze agog. Set in 1837, we meet an eclectic cast of characters on the dirt streets of twin towns vying to become the greatest city of the Western Reserve. Their rivalry takes expression in the form of building a bridge across the Cuyahoga River. Readers will laugh at the farce as the plot unfolds, enjoy the exploits of interesting characters, and admire the whole scenic spectacle that Beatty describes with enthusiasm and joy.

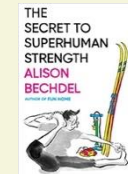


The Secret to Superhuman Strength

Bechdel, Alison

7/17/21

Intensity. Prolific cartoonist Alison Bechdel offers laughs and insight in her graphic memoir titled, The Secret to Superhuman Strength. Bechdel chronicles her lifelong engagement in fitness, following one fad or program after another. Beneath that surface story is a thoughtful examination of our interdependent lives, expressed in multiple ways with sensitivity. For those readers who enjoy the visual stimulation of the graphic form along with the compact text to read will find this book a delight.

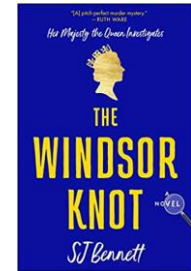


The Windsor Knot

Bennett, SJ

5/6/21

Clever. SJ Bennett opens a new crime series featuring a familiar protagonist: Queen Elizabeth II. Under Bennett's conceit, the Queen solves crimes in her spare time, and proves herself to be an unerring judge of character in the process. The setting for the crime in the novel titled, The Windsor Knot, is Windsor Castle, where an overnight guest has been found dead in one of the bedrooms. Thanks to a poorly tied knot, what appeared to be suicide looks now like foul play. The manner in which the Queen pursues her inquiries will delight those readers who love crime fiction, and the use of her assistant private secretary brings those two women closer together. I was entertained by this clever novel and look forward to the next case investigated by the Detective Queen.

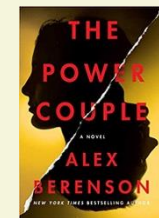


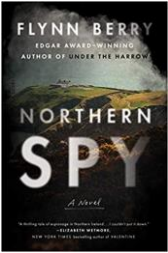
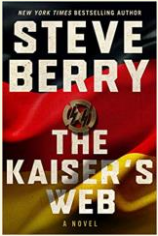
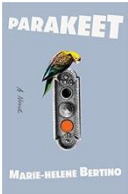
The Power Couple

Berenson, Alex


3/25/21

Secrets. Patient readers who allow Alex Berenson to draw us inside a marriage will be rewarded by the twists and surprises in a novel titled, The Power Couple. While Brian and Rebecca are celebrating their 20th anniversary on a trip to Europe with their children, nineteen-year-old Kira is kidnapped. Instead of a direct thrilling plot, Berenson leads us away from the current action to learn about the couple's backstory and secrets. While tension remains taut, especially during Kira's captivity, our impressions of different characters change as we learn more, including delightful surprises that open our eyes. By the time the novel comes close to an ending, most readers will be unsure



				<p>exactly how things will turn out. They do resolve, of course, to this reader's great satisfaction.</p> <p>Peace. Fans of thrillers may enjoy Flynn Berry's novel titled, Northern Spy, because of the fast-paced plot action. Beneath the tension and conflict that provide the backdrop for the novel, there's an underlying hunger for peace. Berry develops the characters in ways that readers quickly appreciate the familiar humanity in which every person makes compromises and finds a space for love, especially within families. On one page, we are caught up in the turmoil of espionage, while on another, we observe the nurturing of a child.</p>	
Northern Spy	Berry, Flynn	****	12/6/21		
The Kaiser's Web	Berry, Steve	****	3/18/21	<p>Heritage. The sixteenth installment in the Cotton Malone series by Steve Berry is a novel titled, The Kaiser's Web. A candidate for election as Chancellor of Germany stokes nationalistic sentiments and represents those who are proud of their heritage. Cotton is asked to help the incumbent Chancellor who is vulnerable in her race for reelection. There are secrets involved, investigations in South America and South Africa, as well as in secret Swiss vaults. Berry speculates about an alternate Nazi history, and offers plot twists and surprises that will delight fans.</p>	
Parakeet	Bertino, Marie-Helene	***	2/4/21	<p>Bride. Let Marie-Helene Bertino's finely constructed sentences lull you as you read her novel titled, Parakeet, so you can dream along with the surreal narrative. We meet the protagonist known as the bride as she faces the emotional intensity of her</p>	

wedding week. Her dead grandmother visits her in the form of a parakeet and presents a warning and a challenge. The momentum of the novel involves the bride's response to the visit of the parakeet. I loved the finely written prose but can tolerate only so much surreality.

<u>Afterland</u>	Beukes, Lauren	****	<u>1/5/21</u>	<p>Escape. Are you ready for a different pandemic? If so, consider reading Lauren Beukes' exciting novel titled, <u>Afterland</u>, about the journey of a twelve-year-old boy, Miles, and his mother, Cole, who cross the United States from Seattle to Miami to escape a fate for Miles that Cole finds untenable. Cole is fierce in her efforts to protect Miles, and the plot momentum delivers intensity and thrilling action. Readers who love a great story with interesting characters and thrilling action are those most likely to enjoy this novel.</p>	
----------------------------------	----------------	------	-------------------------------	--	---

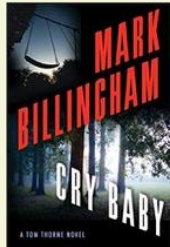
[Each of Us Killers](#)

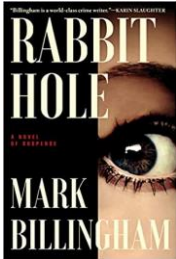

Bhatt, Jenny

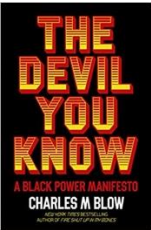
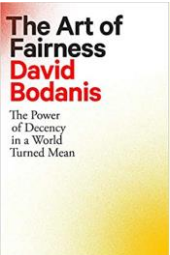
Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.



<u>Cry Baby</u>	Billingham, Mark	****	<u>8/19/21</u>	<p>Missing. Fans of recurring protagonist Tom Thorne may feel a bit of whiplash as the seventeenth installment by Mark Billingham, a novel titled, <u>Cry Baby</u>, takes us back to 1996. Close readers will see this as a prequel to the debut novel, <i>Sleepyhead</i>. Whether this is the first Tom Thorne novel for you or if you'd read them all, you'll find in this installment a talented detective in the middle of an interesting case involving a missing young boy.</p>	
---------------------------------	------------------	------	--------------------------------	--	---

				<p>Tension builds after others connected to the boy are killed. Fans of detective fiction will love the dead ends and twists in the story, and by the time you've guessed with confidence what happened to the missing boy, you will be well on your way to finishing off an entertaining book.</p> <p>Unreliable. Alice Armitage, the unreliable narrator of Mark Billingham's novel titled, <u>Rabbit Hole</u>, began to annoy me within the first few pages of this book. She's a patient in an acute psychiatric ward and her running commentary has an erratic, frantic and troubled rhythm. While this is not Wonderland, there is a rabbit hole through which Alice serves as our guide. Patient readers who stick with Alice will be rewarded by a terrific narrative with murders to solve and the constant question about how reliable Alice is in what she is telling readers. Spending time with Alice in the psych ward was thrilling and entertaining, and every twist was executed by Billingham with great skill.</p>	
<u>Rabbit Hole</u>	Billingham, Mark	*****	<u>9/8/21</u>		
<u>Animal, Vegetable, Junk: A History of Food, from Sustainable to Suicidal</u>	Bittman, Mark	*****	<u>7/17/21</u>		

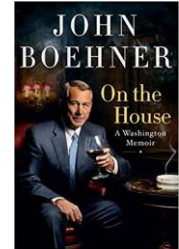
				<p>a way we can transform current practices and move toward a better future. He makes a strong case for all the benefits of agroecology. Readers interested in nutrition and public policy will find a lot to chew on after reading this book.</p> <p>Intentionality. Charles Blow makes a perfectly reasonable proposal to fellow Black citizens in his book titled, <u>The Devil You Know: A Black Power Manifesto</u>. Move back home to the American South to increase the density of Black residents to gain voting power to exercise Black power. Through intentionality in aggregating together, white supremacy can be defeated by the actions of Black citizens. Blow mentions specific states where such action is most likely to succeed and uses his own positive experience in moving to Georgia as an example of positive change. His case is convincing and bold and, if his manifesto is followed, could result in a successful reverse Great Migration. Readers interested in public policy will find a lot to think about after reading this cogent book.</p>	
<u>The Devil You Know: A Black Power Manifesto</u>	Blow, Charles	*****	2/13/21		
<u>The Art of Fairness: The Power of Decency in a World Turned Mean</u>	Bodanis, David	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	

On the House: A
Washington
Memoir

Boehner, John

6/19/21

Zippity. Former Speaker of the United States House of Representatives John Boehner's memoir titled, On the House: A Washington Memoir, should delight all but a few readers. Boehner presents himself as a humble guy who grew up in a big family and the family bar, maintained conservative values and lived a consistent and genuine life following a set of Boehnerisms that are listed in the book. Looking beyond the awe shucks, regular guy persona, he displays his political chops in the ways he talks about a lot of people he worked during his time in Washington. Rest assured, Nancy Pelosi can look beyond his words of praise, and Ted Cruz won't be using any Boehner quotes in his next campaign. This is a cheerful story from the guy who sang *Zippity Doo Dah* as he bid farewell to public service. Follow his example from the book cover and quaff the tippie of your choice as you listen to what Boehner has to say.

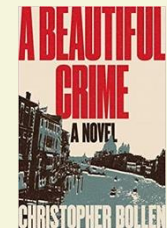



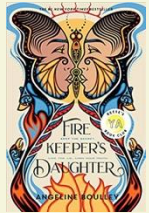
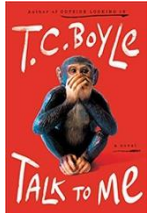
A Beautiful Crime

Bollen, Christopher

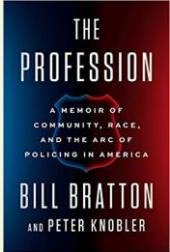
6/8/21

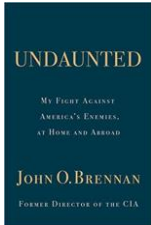
Venice. An interesting novel by Christopher Bollen titled, A Beautiful Crime, about scheming and deception becomes more enchanted by the setting of most of the novel in Venice. Nick Brink and Clay Guillory meet in New York, fall in love, and plan a crime to give them a secure and happy future together. Bollen draws readers into their deception and before we know it, we are alongside the characters in Venice, agog at the setting, and shocked at the lengths to which people will go once plans are set in motion. Fans of crime fiction, and any reader who loves



				Venice, will find something to enjoy in this crime novel.	
<u>The Regrets</u>	Bonnaffons, Amy	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
<u>Firekeeper's Daughter</u>	Boulley, Angeline	*****	<u>6/19/21</u>	<p>Hockey. Angeline Boulley's debut novel titled, <u>Firekeeper's Daughter</u>, introduces a strong female protagonist who will delight readers of this book. Daunis Fontaine plays hockey with great skill as she's ready to leave home for college out of town in hope that she will find her place in the world. Family tragedy keeps her closer to home as meth plagues the community and the nearby Ojibwe reservation. Daunis' knowledge of Ojibwe traditional medicine gets put to the test as she's called on to do things beyond her eighteen years. The plot is engaging, the characters complex, and Daunis a heroine to be remembered.</p>	
<u>Talk to Me</u>	Boyle, T.C.	*****	<u>9/23/21</u>	<p>Sam. The center of attention in T.C. Boyle's novel titled, <u>Talk to Me</u>, is a young chimp named Sam who appears on the book jacket. Guy Schermerhorn is a college professor devoted to a project in which he is raising Sam in a human household, teaching Sam to converse with human housemates using sign language. After undergraduate Aimee Villard moves in, Boyle has the backdrop for exploring all the ethical and philosophical issues to explore about interspecies interaction, which he does with great skill. I found this novel develops the notion of what it means</p>	

to be human in ways that should engage readers, and helps us appreciate and understand the power of language. We also have to face what we are willing to do for love, in whatever form we find it.

<p><u>The Profession: A Memoir of Community, Race, and the Arc of Policing in America</u></p>	<p>Bratton, Bill and Peter Knobler</p>	<p>*****</p>	<p><u>7/22/21</u></p>	<p>Change. Bill Bratton's leadership of police forces in Boston, New York and Los Angeles has given him a front row seat for the significant changes in police work over the past five decades. In his memoir titled, <u>The Profession: A Memoir of Community, Race, and the Arc of Policing in America</u>, Bratton talks about the different roles he has performed, and how, in every case, he has assessed the situation, gathered data, and implemented change. His account is thoughtful and authoritative as he relates his perspective on policing. Readers will find it interesting to observe the pace of change, which changes stuck, and how fragile the profession can be to sustain goodwill and effectiveness when rogue cops behave in ways that taint those doing a good job.</p>	
---	--	--------------	---------------------------------------	--	---

<p><u>Undaunted: My Fight Against America's Enemies, At Home and Abroad</u></p>	<p>Brennan, John O.</p>	<p>*****</p>	<p><u>4/13/21</u></p>	<p>Values. Readers can learn a lot about national security from former CIA Director John O. Brennan's memoir titled, <u>Undaunted: My Fight Against America's Enemies, At Home and Abroad</u>. If we are able to set aside our political alignments for a moment to read about the career of a civil servant, we can find values that are likely to be held in common by citizens at all points along a political continuum. Brennan grew up in working class New Jersey, and a thread of integrity connects his upbringing to his most important roles</p>	
---	-------------------------	--------------	---------------------------------------	--	---

in government service. Brennan is smart and scrappy, and he leans toward candor in this well-written book. I encourage readers to set aside any preconceptions about Brennan and listen to him tell the story of his life and the jobs he performed in the national security interests of the United States.

The Authority of
the Court and the
Peril of Politics

Breyer, Stephen

10/25/21

Audience. I finished reading Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer's book titled, The Authority of the Court and the Peril of Politics, thinking about his intended audience. If his audience is the informed American citizen, his claims of the court not being political come across as naïve. If his audience is his fellow justices and his message is for them not to overreach because they may find the authority of the court diminished, that made a bit more sense to me. I thought of Alan Greenspan's confession about his foundational error in the runup to the financial crisis. He assumed that banks would act prudently as a form of self-preservation. As we know, they didn't. Why Breyer might expect fellow justices to preserve the authority of the Supreme Court by not overreaching in their decisions, I can't imagine. We will all watch the exercise of power and learn how much peril can be absorbed by our democratic republic.

THE
*Authority of
the Court
and the Peril
of Politics*
STEPHEN
BREYER

Sad Janet

Britsch, Lucie

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.

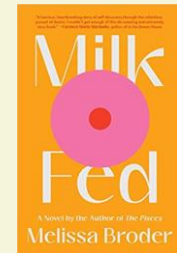


Milk Fed

Broder, Melissa

5/14/21

Appetites. Melissa Broder's novel titled, Milk Fed, offers a wide-ranging exploration of appetite. Twenty-four-year-old protagonist Rachel has abandoned the Judaism of her youth to pursue an intense focus on calorie counting. By controlling what goes into her mouth, she believes she has taken charge of her life. Life changes for Rachel after a personnel change at her favorite frozen yogurt shop. The precise small portion that she used to receive changes when the new employee, Miriam, begins to dole out much larger portions. Rachel is attracted to Orthodox plus size Miriam, whose abundance provides the yin to Rachel's restrictive yang. What follows is the pursuit of desires that will satisfy all kinds of appetites and an examination of how we want to be fed. There are many times to laugh and wince on the pages of this novel, but in Broder's capable hands, we see the changes in Rachel as she comes to terms with who she is and what she needs.

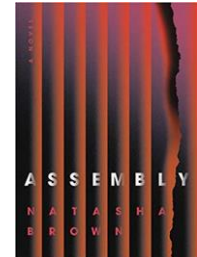


Assembly

Brown, Natasha

11/16/21

Whiteness. By throwing out any unnecessary words in her debut novel titled, Assembly, Natasha Brown uses just over one hundred pages to assemble and dismantle the stories we tell ourselves and each other about class, race, gender, success, and safety. The Black female narrator examines her life and experiences with clarity. The societal canvas presents Whiteness as the impossible ideal for woman like her. The expectation of obedience and complicity comes from a colonial heritage that remains central to contemporary life in Britain. This incisive novel presents modern life head-on and eyes wide open.

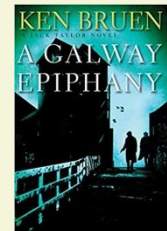


A Galway Epiphany

Bruen, Ken

8/5/21

Miracle. The latest novel by Ken Bruen featuring protagonist and private eye Jack Taylor is titled, A Galway Epiphany. This time out, Jack leaves his quiet country life for a day in Galway. A truck hits Jack and he spends three weeks in hospital in a coma. When he awakens, he learns that the whole country has heard his story because people believe two children who tended to him just after the accident are saints, and his health is the result of a miracle. Skeptics have asked Jack to find the children so the miracle can either be verified or some other truth can be discovered. What follows is Jack Taylor at his very best, to the delight of fans of this series.

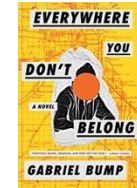


Everywhere You Don't Belong

Bump, Gabriel

12/13/21

Escape. Gabriel Bump's debut novel titled, Everywhere You Don't Belong, tells the coming-of-age story of protagonist Claude McKay. Claude is an ordinary kid trying to find his place in the world. Bump draws the South Side of Chicago with care and love, not flinching at describing the troubled places. Claude seeks to escape from his Chicago home and redefine himself at a college far away from what he's known to this time in his life. Bump gives us an Everyman story of struggle and hope, filled with well-developed characters.

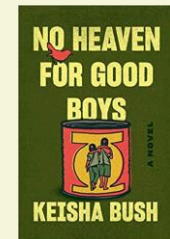


No Heaven for Good Boys

Bush, Keisha

2/23/21

Tradition. My heart ached as I read about the plight of six-year-old Ibrahimah in Keisha Bush's novel titled, No Heaven for Good Boys. In Senegal there is tradition and honor for a young man to be sent away from home to study the Koran with a teacher called a marabout. A chance encounter in Ibrahimah's remote village leads Marabout Ahmed to select Ibrahimah to join his older cousin Etienne in Dakar to study the Koran. After arriving in the capital city, Ibrahimah finds little instruction, little food and a life spent begging to enrich Marabout Ahmed. On the streets of the city, the dangers are life threatening as the young boys called Talibé are exposed to danger from many sources. Bush drew upon true events to describe this abusive practice. This story of a fight for survival will be difficult to read, may break your heart, and might bring renewed confidence and hope in the goodwill of most people.

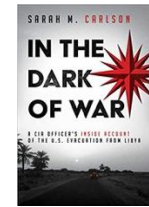


In the Dark of War:
A CIA Officer's
Inside Account of
the U.S.
Evacuation from
Libya

Carlson, Sarah M.

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.

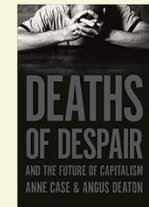


Deaths of Despair
and the Future of
Capitalism

Case, Anne and
Angus Deaton

2/23/21

Injustice. In their book titled, Deaths of Despair and the Future of Capitalism, Anne Case and Angus Deaton diagnosis serious problems in American life and offer thoughtful solutions to address the current state of injustice experienced by so many citizens. They are critical of areas in which capitalism doesn't seem to be working, and they rail against the high cost of healthcare that doesn't deliver great results. Supported by data, their analysis provides a foundation for all parties interested in public policy change.



Bestiary

Chang, K-Ming

3/18/21

Myths. In her debut novel titled, Bestiary, K-Ming Chang introduces readers to three generations of women who navigate through a world of myth and reality. If you're comfortable with a woman growing a tiger's tail and remain at ease while unsure what's real and what's imagined, you're likely to enjoy this novel. Chang's writing will appeal to readers who appreciate literary fiction, and the motifs of water, snakes and keys will delight such readers. Personally, I don't know enough about Taiwanese mythology to appreciate the references, but I found the writing engaging and imaginative.



The Paris Library

Charles, Janet
Skieslien

4/13/21

Odile. Janet Skieslien Charles takes the true story of the actions of the librarians of the American Library in Paris during World War II and uses her fine writing skills to present a novel titled, The Paris Library. Protagonist Odile Souchet was a young librarian at the American Library in Paris when the Nazis take Paris. Charles tells us what Odile did at that time, and also draws her in Montana in the 1980s where she lives next door to a young woman named Lily who loves language and books. Charles connects Odile and Lily as she lets readers see how relationships make us who we are, and our relationships with books and authors can also link us together. After I read this novel, I made a list of the libraries that have enriched my life, and each of the ten I selected contributed in significant ways to a life well lived. Everyone who reads this novel will think more about books, about libraries and about the power of relationships.

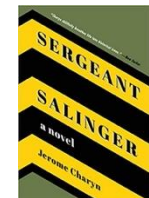


Sergeant Salinger

Charyn, Jerome

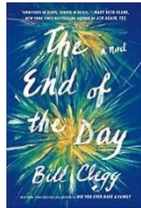
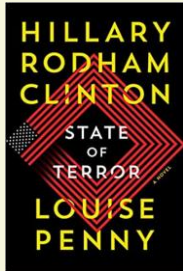
9/8/21

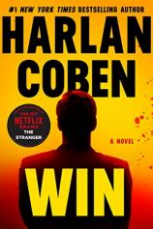
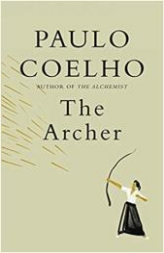
Trauma. J.D. Salinger has generated curiosity among generations of readers because of his reticence to talk about himself and the reclusive life he led after his writing became renowned. In his novel titled, Sergeant Salinger, prolific writer Jerome Charyn presents an account of Salinger's life during World War II. Readers are left with the impression that it was the trauma of the war and his personal suffering that led to the quality of Salinger's writing. The contrast of Salinger before and after the war is developed with



great skill and insight. Whether you're interested or not in a fictional interpretation of Salinger, you're likely to enjoy this entertaining and finely written novel.

<u>Better Off Dead</u>	Child, Lee and Andrew Child	****	<u>12/18/21</u>	<p>Adversaries. The twenty-sixth installment in Lee Child's Jack Reacher series is a novel titled, <u>Better Off Dead</u>, co-written with his brother, Andrew Child. The action opens with Reacher walking west in the Arizona desert minding his own business. What follows is his enlistment in the search for a missing person, and his pitting his skills against a very worthy adversary. Fans of the series will enjoy all the ways that Reacher plays the angles, wipes out obstacles, and improvises the best way to prevail.</p>	
<u>Martita, I Remember You</u>	Cisneros, Sandra	****	<u>10/15/21</u>	<p>Friends. In her short novel titled, <u>Martita, I Remember You</u>, Sandra Cisneros explores close friendship. We meet three young women in Paris and savor the intensity of their brief time together. Through letters and recollection, we learn about their time in Paris and can choose to read the narrative in English, Spanish, or both. The text of their letters reinforces the depth of their relationships and how the time and place where they first met comes alive as it is remembered.</p>	
<u>Piranesi</u>	Clarke, Susanna	****	<u>1/5/21</u>	<p>Labyrinth. For an imaginative escape from your own reality, consider reading Susanna Clarke's novel titled, <u>Piranesi</u>. Most of the novel is set in an alternative world, a labyrinth with what seems like unending rooms full of beauty where tidewater ebbs and flows. Protagonist</p>	

				<p>Piranesi explores this world and learns the rhythms of life. For a while Piranesi seems to be alone, but after the “Other” appears, things get even more interesting. It will take a while for many readers to become acclimated to Clarke’s prose, but patience pays off for those who enjoy a complicated structure and lots of levels of meaning. There’s no time like the present for exploring a new world.</p>	
<u>The End of the Day</u>	Clegg, Bill	*****	<u>2/23/21</u>	<p>Secrets. Introspection leads us to confirm or regret past decisions. In his novel titled, <u>The End of the Day</u>, Bill Clegg lets readers meander across multiple characters and a long period of time as we gradually come to see the connections among people and the consequences of past decisions. After secrets are kept for what seemed like good reasons at the time, the consequences of those secrets have unexpected repercussions in the lives of different people. Patient readers who surrender to confusion about connections are rewarded after the pieces all fall in place.</p>	
<u>State of Terror</u>	Clinton, Hillary Rodham and Louise Penny	*****	<u>11/22/21</u>	<p>Bombs. Readers willing to place political allegiances aside for a few hours and acknowledge that two women had a ball collaborating on a novel so maybe there’s something to enjoy in the product of their efforts. Former United States Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton joined forces with crime novelist Louise Penny to write a thrilling novel titled, <u>State of Terror</u>. With Penny’s skills at character and plot, and Clinton’s insider view of world affairs, the result is an entertaining novel about bombs ready to devastate three locations</p>	

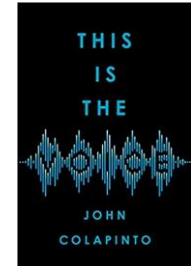
				<p>in the United States. Penny fans will love the connections in this book to Three Pines, and Clinton fans will love the behavior of the fictional Secretary of State as she interacts with the President and various world leaders. I was thoroughly entertained.</p>	
<u>Win</u>	Coben, Harlan	*****	<u>3/25/21</u>	<p>Reprised. Fans of Harlan Coben will be delighted that he's reprised a past character for a complete and exciting novel of his own, titled, <u>Win</u>. Protagonist Windsor Horne Lockwood III becomes a person of interest after a recluse is found murdered in a penthouse apartment on the Upper West Side. Inside the apartment was a Vermeer stolen from the Lockwood family two decades earlier, as well as a suitcase bearing Win's initials. There's mystery behind the identity of the recluse, and secrets in the Lockwood family that have been kept for a very long time. The story moves quickly, the characters are interesting, and the development of Win in his own novel was satisfying.</p>	
<u>The Archer</u>	Coelho, Paulo	****	<u>1/5/21</u>	<p>Guidance. Philosophers tackle tough questions about the meaning of life. Gurus of every type offer guidance on "how to" almost everything. In his novel titled, <u>The Archer</u>, Paulo Coelho tells a story about how to live a meaningful and integrated life. While brief with words, this novel overflows with wisdom and guidance for every reader's thoughtful reflection. For readers who are spiritual but not religious, this book can provide a launchpad for thinking about one's life.</p>	

[This Is the Voice](#)

Colapinto, John

[4/22/21](#)

Informative. As an amateur singer and multi-decade member of a choir, I came to John Colapinto's book titled, [This Is the Voice](#), with some knowledge about the instrument I use when I sing. Happily, I was both entertained and informed by this book which crosses many disciplines to describe the ways in which our ability to convey meaning through sound has defined our species. I ached when I read about how Colapinto damaged his voice and thought about the skills of those otolaryngologists who restore and strengthen voices. Next time I feel strain while reaching for a note, I'll think of this book, relax, and not put my vocal instrument at risk. Readers who enjoy popular science books will find a lot to learn from this entertaining and interesting book.



[Big Bad](#)

Collins, Whitney

[7/22/21](#)

Wild. The baker's dozen collection of short stories by Whitney Collins in a book titled, [Big Bad](#), are funny, thoughtful, quirky and in each case, deep. Collins' finely written prose can capture character in a few sentences and reveal with great creativity some aspect of the darkness inside each of us, that thing that gets the best of us from time to time. Collins places characters in ordinary places and reveals the extraordinary depths of human behavior. Each of these stories can be a well-savored treat for those readers who love short fiction and enjoy the breadth of ways to live one's life.



Detroit Style: Car Design in the Motor City, 1950-2020

Colman, Benjamin

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.

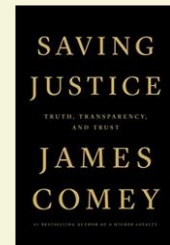


Saving Justice: Truth, Transparency, and Trust

Comey, James

3/18/21

Lessons. You've already decided whether you're interested in reading a book by former FBI Director James Comey, so what I have to say may have no impact. In his book titled, Saving Justice: Truth, Transparency, and Trust, Comey talks about lessons he learned from his life and shares with some candor specific mistakes he made, especially early in his career as a prosecutor for the Department of Justice. Someone needs to speak to a general audience about the principles and values that provide direction and guidance to the administration of impartial justice in the United States. Comey may or not be the right voice, but what he says in this book made sense to me and reinforces the importance of fairness and equity in the enforcement of law and the administration of impartial justice.

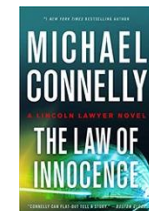


The Law of Innocence

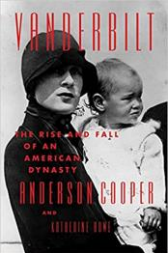
Connelly, Michael

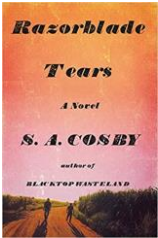
1/26/21

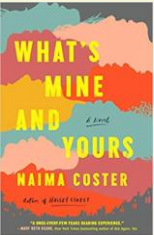
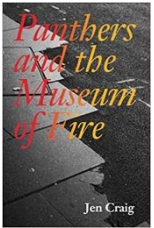
Defendant. The sixth installment of Michael Connelly's Lincoln Lawyer series featuring defense attorney Mickey Haller is a novel titled, The Law of Innocence. Haller's world turns upside down after he is arrested for murder and has to defend himself from jail. Mickey knows that he's innocent although the evidence looks bad for him, and that to restore his reputation he will need to find the real murderer. Fans of crime fiction and this series are those readers most likely to enjoy this



novel. I enjoyed the plot momentum and the return of familiar and interesting characters.

<u>Vanderbilt: The Rise and Fall of an American Dynasty</u>	Cooper, Anderson and Katherine Howe	*****	<u>12/18/21</u>	<p>Dissipation. Journalist Anderson Cooper and historian Katherine Howe collaborated to write an account of the Vanderbilt family in a book titled, <u>Vanderbilt: The Rise and Fall of an American Dynasty</u>. Cooper is the great-great-great-grandson of Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt who built a family fortune in shipping and railroads. We see the gilded age from a family perspective in this book and watch the dissipation of the dynasty through family dysfunction and overspending. The individual family members are presented with insight and sensitivity. Readers interested in history and family dynamics will find a lot to enjoy in this entertaining and interesting book.</p>	
---	-------------------------------------	-------	-----------------	---	---

<u>Razorblade Tears</u>	Cosby, S.A.	*****	<u>12/13/21</u>	<p>Fathers. Try to take a break during those few moments while reading S.A. Cosby's novel titled, <u>Razorblade Tears</u>, when the tension pauses. Catch your breath, smile at the finely written prose, and then get back to the story. Two ex-cons team up to track down whoever killed their sons. The complex characters are well developed in this story, and Cosby explores violence, prejudice, and love with great insight and skill. Fans of crime fiction will love this story and may well end up quoting some lines from Cosby that are just plain superb.</p>	
-------------------------	-------------	-------	-----------------	--	--

<p><u>What's Mine and Yours</u></p>	<p>Coster, Naima</p>	<p>****</p>	<p><u>4/27/21</u></p> <p>Decades. Naima Coster packs so much of the range of human experience in a handful of characters across a few decades in her novel titled, <u>What's Mine and Yours</u>. The narrative moves back and forth in time, as we get to know these characters and how they navigate through life and its struggles. We settle in to appreciate the different ways that families are made and broken, and how love and marriage can be both deep and fragile, strong and weak. It doesn't take long for us to care deeply about what happens to these characters as they go through their lives. Coster addresses issues of contemporary life with a light touch, since it is all done through those characters that we come to know and appreciate as humans just like us, doing their best with the hands they've been dealt.</p>	
<p><u>Panthers and the Museum of Fire</u></p>	<p>Craig, Jen</p>	<p>****</p>	<p><u>4/27/21</u></p> <p>Manuscript. Join the stream of consciousness of the narrator of Jen Craig's novel titled, <u>Panthers and the Museum of Fire</u>, and enjoy a fascinating trip visiting the narrator's world. The title refers to a manuscript of that title that the narrator received from a recently deceased writer. That dead writer picked the title from a highway sign directing drivers to two locations, Panthers, and to the Museum of Fire. The riffs in this novel explore friendship, conversations, and adolescent struggles. The prose is finely written, and the novel will appeal to those readers who enjoy literary fiction and appreciate not needing a novel to follow any specific rules or expectations. Sit back</p>	

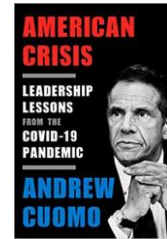
The French Paradox	Crosby, Ellen	****	5/14/21	<p>and enjoy the prose and become enthralled by the life of this narrator.</p> <p>Jackie. The eleventh installment of Ellen Crosby's Wine Country mystery series featuring vintner Lucie Montgomery is a novel titled, The French Paradox. Fans of the series will be delighted with the return of a familiar cast of characters and a plot that involves Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis and her multi-decade relationship with Lucie's grandfather. True to the formula, there's also a murder to solve.</p>	
Here Is the Beehive	Crossan, Sarah	****	10/25/21	<p>Structure. In her first novel for adults titled, Here Is the Beehive, Sarah Crossan chose to take risks and trust that readers will make it all work. She chose verse as the structure for the novel and made adultery the subject. Protagonist Ana is a lawyer whose affair with Connor ended abruptly with his sudden death. Having written his will, Ana ends up getting to know Connor's wife, Rebecca, while handling the estate. The novel moves back and forth in time without much warning, thereby requiring a reader's close attention. The title refers to a nursery rhyme and Ana's keeping of the great secret of her affair. We feel the sting of life for Ana as her inner and outer lives are out of sync.</p>	
The Wind Traveler	Cueto, Alonso	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	

American Crisis:
Leadership
Lessons from the
COVID-19
Pandemic

Cuomo, Andrew

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.



Second Place

Cusk, Rachel

7/10/21

Artists. What we see in others may not be matched in any respect by what others see in us. The characters in Rachel Cusk's novel titled, Second Place, seem to bring out the worst in each other. At the least, they desire some reciprocal response from each other and instead find disgust or rejection. Thanks to Cusk's finely written prose, we bask in the pleasure of observing complex and interesting characters pursue relationships. Writer M invites painter L to come to live and work in the second structure where she and her husband live in the primary house. That setting provides the landscape for this engaging novel.

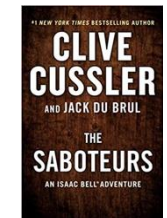


The Saboteurs

Cussler, Clive

8/5/21


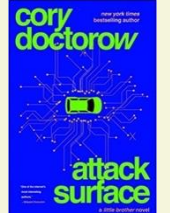
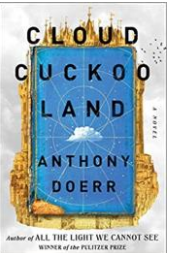
Panama. The twelfth installment in the Clive Cussler franchise featuring detective Isaac Bell is a novel titled, The Saboteurs. Most of the action in the novel takes place at the site where the Panama Canal is under construction in the early part of the 20th century. As usual with this series, the pacing is brisk, the heroes and villains are well matched, and Isaac succeeds in completing his mission against tough odds. Fans of this series are those readers most likely to enjoy this romp in Panama.



<u>Fast Ice</u>	Cussler, Clive and Graham Brown	****	<u>4/13/21</u>	<p>Chilly. Choose a warm place to read the eighteenth NUMA files novel by the Clive Cussler franchise, a book titled, <u>Fast Ice</u>. So much of the action takes place in frigid conditions that you might feel the chills as the action propels readers from one cold place to an even colder one. The familiar NUMA cast is back, led by swashbuckling Kurt Austin and his sidekick Joe Zavala. All their skills and the expertise of other recurring characters are drawn into a race to defeat a finely drawn villain, Ryland Lloyd, who is in the final stages of implementing actions that will lead Earth into another ice age. While the formula of this series demands that the good guys win, it's a close-run thing that will satisfy those readers who love fast-paced action novels.</p>	
<u>What Tech Calls Thinking: An Inquiry into the Intellectual Bedrock of Silicon Valley</u>	Daub, Adrian	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
<u>Damnation Spring</u>	Davidson, Ash	****	<u>10/15/21</u>	<p>Redwoods. The debut novel by Ash Davidson titled, <u>Damnation Spring</u>, is set in the redwood country of California in the 1970s. Through the lens of the Gunderson family, we enter a world of hard work, close family ties and tradition facing sea change to their way of life. Colleen and Rich are raising their son, Chub, in a logging town. Davidson explores the depths of love, betrayal, and redemption in the setting of a tightly knit community facing life-changing losses. The prose is</p>	

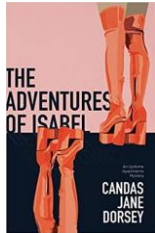
				<p>finely written, the characters are complex and well-developed, and the story engaging.</p> <p>Fatherhood. Any parent reading Peter Ho Davies' novel titled, <u>A Lie Someone Told You About Yourself</u>, will ache for the unnamed characters at the heart of the story. After testing in utero reveals the likelihood of abnormality, a mother and father struggle with the choice of whether or not to abort the pregnancy. We feel their struggle with this decision and the guilt and shame that they face. When their next pregnancy produces a son, we see parenting mostly from the father's perspective, as parents exude love for this most wanted boy who has secured a place on the autism spectrum. Davies' fine writing and insights into fatherhood will propel readers through this novel and into thinking about many dimensions of fatherhood.</p>	
<u>A Lie Someone Told You About Yourself</u>	Davies, Peter Ho	****	<u>1/26/21</u>		
<u>The Silence</u>	DeLillo, Don	****	<u>1/16/21</u>	<p>Bearings. What happens when we lose our bearings? In his short novel titled, <u>The Silence</u>, Don DeLillo presents another take on the dread of contemporary life and the immediacy of our mortality. Because of his finely written prose, we feel the struggle of the characters like us in this novel who struggle to find language and engage in conversation after technology has suddenly shut down. Following such a shock, how do we know where we are, where we are going, and what the hell is going on? Welcome to our world as presented by a talented writer who finds a</p>	

				way to condense so much into this short book.	
<u>Eat the Buddha: Life and Death in a Tibetan Town</u>	Demick, Barbara	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
<u>The Perishing</u>	Deón, Natashaia	****	<u>12/6/21</u>	Immortal. Readers can approach Natashaia Deón's novel titled, <u>The Perishing</u> , from a variety of perspectives. For those who enjoy historical fiction, this novel brings to life 1930s Los Angeles. Readers who enjoy science fiction elements will enjoy how a character who is immortal ties together the past, the present, and the future. And those readers who can't read enough about strong Black female characters, this novel will be a perfect fit.	
<u>The Patient</u>	DeWitt, Jasper	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
<u>Let Me Tell You What I Mean</u>	Didion, Joan	****	<u>3/9/21</u>	Incisive. There are twelve essays by Joan Didion in a collection titled, <u>Let Me Tell You What I Mean</u> . These pieces were written between 1968 and 2000 and showcase this fine writer's incisive focus and her concurrent detachment as she presents her views. Her use of language is always a model for aspiring writers, and these essays provide loads of examples of how to write well. Like all great artists, her eye sees something that most of us miss, and that when she shows us what she sees,	

				we can understand better our lives and our world.	
<u>At Night All Blood is Black</u>	Diop, David	*****	7/17/21	<p>Hands. Take a close look at the image of the hand on the cover of David Diop's finely written novel titled, <u>At Night All Blood is Black</u>, because you are likely to retain the image of hands as you read this book. Set during World War I, the novel takes readers into the horror of trench warfare where hands will represent the madness that can take over the actions of soldiers, especially protagonist Alfa Ndiaye, who left Senegal to fight with the French. The spare prose leads readers to concentrate attention and receive images that place us in the setting of trauma.</p>	
<u>Attack Surface</u>	Doctorow, Cory	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
<u>Cloud Cuckoo Land</u>	Doerr, Anthony	*****	10/25/21	<p>Continuity. Fiction fans will love the connections that Anthony Doerr makes in his finely written novel titled, <u>Cloud Cuckoo Land</u>. Readers become enthralled by the past, the present and the future tied together by their immediate challenges and linked by a manuscript. We go from fifteenth century Constantinople to a performance of a story in a library in contemporary Idaho to a virtual library in a spacecraft in the future looking for some place more hospitable to humans than Earth. Doerr weaves out the overall story bouncing back and forth in time, making all the shifts relative and letting us get lost</p>	

in the fragility of all stories. I felt great satisfaction after all the pieces came together and found great pleasure in the journey with these complex characters and in the manuscripts that contain all our stories.

<u>The Suicide House</u>	Donlea, Charlie	****	<u>2/13/21</u>	<p>Westmont. The setting for multiple deaths in Charlie Donlea’s novel titled, <u>The Suicide House</u>, is an elite school in Indiana, Westmont Preparatory High School. Donley develops multiple plot lines and layers depth onto multiple characters as he pulls readers into what happened on this campus. While there’s been a conviction for murder, not everyone sees a closed case. Following more deaths, psychologist Lane Phillips and his partner, reconstructionist Rory Moore, converge in Indiana to get to solve the mystery. Fans of character-driven fiction will love Rory and notice our hearts beating faster as she finds herself in peril.</p>	
--	-----------------	------	--------------------------------	--	---

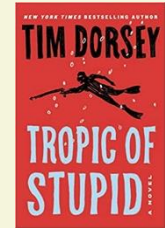
<u>The Adventures of Isabel</u>	Dorsey, Candas Jane	****	<u>7/22/21</u>	<p>Unnamed. Perhaps Jane Candas Dorsey chose to withhold the name of the narrator of her novel titled, <u>The Adventures of Isabel</u>, because the narrator would assume that we know who she is. I expect few lukewarm reactions to this novel: most readers will either find this protagonist and narrator exciting or too different to accept. Mystery fans will love the sharp prose, the snarky amateur detective, and the plot’s rapid pace. Having read this first in a planned Epitome Apartments series, I want to get to know this narrator a lot better, and I am prepared to savor the fine writing and laugh at the sharp wit.</p>	
---	---------------------	------	--------------------------------	---	---

[Tropic of Stupid](#)

Dorsey, Tim

[2/13/21](#)

Genealogy. The twenty-fourth novel by Tim Dorsey featuring Serge Storms is titled, [Tropic of Stupid](#). Set as always in Florida, this time out Serge decides to send his DNA to a genealogy testing company so he can build a family tree and meet his kin. While on the road with sidekick Coleman, they visit Florida parks and run into situations that call for Serge's particular methods of administering justice to those who take advantage of others. Fans of the series will love the plot and laugh at the latest exploits of this quirky duo.




[Burnt Sugar](#)

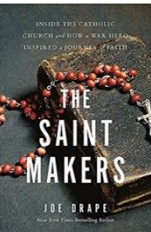
Doshi, Avni

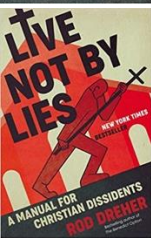
[9/8/21](#)

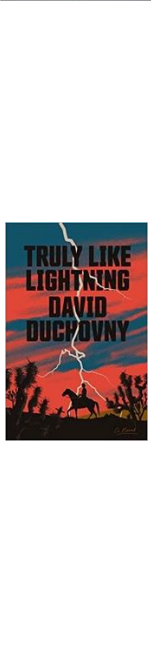
Tara. For her debut novel titled, [Burnt Sugar](#), Avni Doshi selected an examination of one of those most challenging motifs in fiction and in life: the mother-daughter relationship. Could any writer have a new perspective on this relationship? We have the impression of Tara as a free spirit who left her husband to join an ashram, where she placed her daughter, Antara, in the care of Kali Mata, an American devotee. Both Tara and Antara remember the past in different ways, learning the subjectivity of truth and the porousness of identity. The powerful emotions Doshi presents are delivered with finely crafted prose and insight into human behavior. We ache with Antara at her mother's selfishness and instability and smile with her as Tara suffers. Doshi handles anxiety and rage with a perspective that perhaps does add new dimensions to a relationship about which millions of pages have already been written.



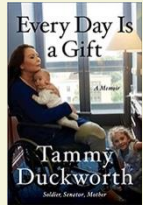
Love	Doyle, Roddy	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
----------------------	--------------	--------	--	----------------------	---


The Saint Makers	Drape, Joe	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
----------------------------------	------------	--------	--	----------------------	---

Live Not by Lies: A Manual for Christian Dissidents	Dreher, Ron	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
---	-------------	--------	--	----------------------	---


Truly Like Lightning	Duchovny, David	*****	5/27/21	<p>Big. Many novelists select a sliver of human experience and convey something about life with insight. In his novel titled, Truly Like Lightning, David Duchovny tackles the big questions of life and offers a story of a tragic hero who struggles with finding his place in the world doing what he discerns is right and trying to be aligned with what he thinks God would want him to do. The setting of this novel in the desert offers a backdrop for addressing those big questions through the choices protagonist Bronson Powers makes for himself, his wives, and his children, as they try to live out a life as Mormons conflicted with the mores of contemporary American life. We all try to answer for ourselves the big questions explored in this finely</p>	
--------------------------------------	-----------------	-------	-------------------------	--	--

written novel. We feel deeply for the characters in this novel as they struggle to discern a right path forward in their lives.

Every Day Is a Gift	Duckworth, Tammy	*****	4/27/21	<p>Upbeat. I'm thrilled that Tammy Duckworth is one of my senators, and I thoroughly enjoyed reading her memoir titled, Every Day Is a Gift. Partisans should note that politics are only slightly present in this book. What all readers get to savor is a life well-lived and told with candor and grace in a voice that's totally down to earth. The whole narrative is upbeat and involves doing whatever it takes to meet a goal. She tells of her early life spent helping her family survive poverty and make their way in the world. We hear of her patriotism in joining the military and becoming an officer and helicopter pilot. We learn about the rocket propelled grenade that hit her helicopter, caused her to lose her legs, and of the heroic efforts of those who saved her life. We learn of her becoming a mother later in life, and about the path by which she entered politics. This is the inspiring story of a patriot who loves her country, has served it with honor, and now works every day to help all citizens.</p>	
-------------------------------------	------------------	-------	-------------------------	---	---

Trafik	Ducornet, Rikki	****	10/8/21	<p>Home. After your everyday reality turns to crap, what will you do next? The characters in Rikki Ducornet's finely written novel titled, Trafik, decide to f-it, and set their sights on an idyllic place and head in that direction. This becomes a journey toward that comfortable place we usually call home, but here is known as Trafik. On the journey toward Trafik,</p>	
------------------------	-----------------	------	-------------------------	--	---

readers are treated by hundreds of finely crafted sentences that cry out to be read more than once. Sometimes, you just need to embrace the absurdity, and in reading this science fiction novel, the sooner you release all your moorings, the better the experience.

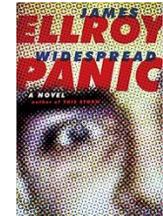
<p><u>Winter in Sokcho</u></p>	<p>Dusapin, Elisa Shua</p>	<p>****</p>	<p><u>9/8/21</u></p> <p>Contrasts. In her debut novel titled, <u>Winter in Sokcho</u>, Elisa Shua Dusapin structures a variety of contrasts for our close examination. Set on the border between North and South Korea, we start with that dramatic geographic and cultural contrast. The protagonist is a young French Korean woman who is the receptionist at a guesthouse. Her mother works at a fishmarket and has the skills to prepare those fish that could be venomous to eat should others wield the knife improperly. A French cartoonist arrives at the guesthouse and develops a constrained relationship with the receptionist, as Dusapin mines their differences to contrast their lives. When they travel together, the inspiration he seeks never seems to be discovered. He avoids the reception's offer to cook for him. We anticipate the culmination of all the contrasts of life and death as he prepares to leave the guesthouse. Fans of literary fiction are those readers most likely to enjoy this novel.</p>	
--------------------------------	----------------------------	-------------	---	---

Widespread Panic

Ellroy, James

9/16/21

Noir. I can think of no better setting for an enjoyable noir novel than Hollywood during the 1950s. James Ellroy masters this setting and that era's style in his novel titled, Widespread Panic. There's dirt to mine on Jack Kennedy, Marilyn Monroe, Rock Hudson, and a host of other prominent figures of that time. The person to reveal all the secrets is protagonist Freddy Otash, a talented rogue. Freddy's voice in Ellroy's hands provides the perfect rhythm to draw readers into that special time and place.

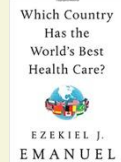


Which Country
Has the World's
Best Health Care?

Emanuel, Ezekiel J.

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.



Dear Senthuran

Emezi, Akwaeke

10/25/21

Letters. Akwaeke Emezi's book titled, Dear Senthuran, is a memoir in letters. Their prose matches the voice readers have come to appreciate in fiction. The expression to family, friends and lovers exposes an inner life and an outer manifestation that contains great depth, complexity, and life-changing decisions. We may not understand their life, but we learn about it through finely written prose and heartfelt engagement with the world. Their storytelling, intelligence, and candor will keep readers entranced by a voice that roars.



[The Death of Vivek Oji](#)

Emezi, Akwaeke

[6/19/21](#)

Cousins. Multiple narrators collaborate to give readers of Akwaeke Emezi's novel titled, [The Death of Vivek Oji](#), many facets of the life and death of Vivek Oji. With finely written prose, Emezi discloses secrets and examines close relationships, especially the one between Vivek and his cousin, Osita. With great sensitivity to the complexity of human behavior, Emezi gently explores issues of identity and acceptance alongside the violence of forced alignment with community expectations.

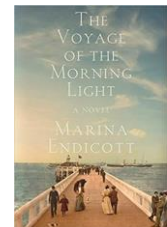


[The Voyage of the Morning Light](#)

Endicott, Marina

[2/13/21](#)

Home. Readers who enjoy historical fiction are those most likely to appreciate Marina Endicott's novel titled, [The Voyage of the Morning Light](#). Set in 1912, we join an interesting and memorable cast of characters on a journey from Nova Scotia to the South Pacific and back. Endicott explores the questions of what it means to be family and where we find home as we join these characters on their journey. She also provides a contemporary lens on the topic of prejudice as she relates what are considered differences and what are similarities in the way we conform or rebel to the expectations of society. Many readers will find the moral complexity in this novel will lead to reflection about contemporary life.



Infinite Country

Engel, Patricia

5/6/21

Identity. Readers will marvel at how much ground Patricia Engel covers over the course of two hundred pages in her novel titled, Infinite Country. We find a family with identity rooted in both Columbia and the United States. We observe separations and unifications. We picture the people and places with clarity thanks to Engel's descriptive prose. We live alongside five family members as we read this novel, and we feel deeply for each of them, and note an increased intensity as a deadline approaches rapidly.



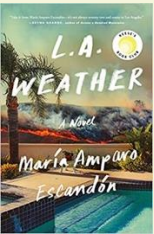
The Dangers of Smoking in Bed

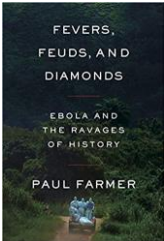
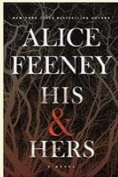
Enriquez, Mariana

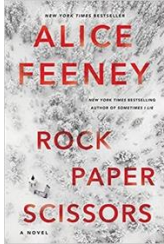
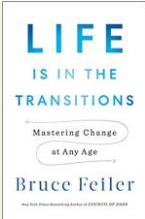
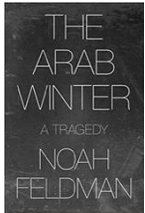
10/8/21

Horrors. Many of us who enjoy short stories want to go to unfamiliar places and see human behavior from fresh perspectives. In her collection titled, The Dangers of Smoking in Bed, Mariana Enriquez uses the backdrop of Argentina to open our eyes to look at the horrors she presents without flinching. Within a few sentences of each story, I found myself unsettled and uncomfortable. It was easy to become distracted by the tone which made everything presented seem typical and normal, which it is not. Perhaps when we receive the creepiness of someone else's life in a place far away through fiction, we can put down the book and examine our own lives with joy and relief. In the time spent with these finely written stories, I was captivated by characters and situations that Enriquez presents with directness and compassion.

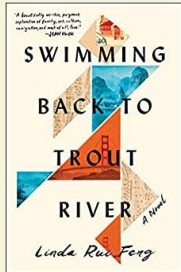


<u>L.A. Weather</u>	Escandón, Maria Amparo	*****	<u>11/6/21</u>	<p>Control. If you think weather in Los Angeles (sunny and warm) is boring, you have not been paying attention. To remedy that, consider reading Maria Amparo Escandón's novel titled, <u>L.A. Weather</u>. We meet the Alvarado family as aspects of their life seem to be out of control. Peril is at hand for reasons known and kept secret. Renewal is required but brings risks. Readers will enjoy spending time with this fascinating extended family as they navigate the storms of life together and apart.</p>	
<u>The Office of Historical Corrections</u>	Evans, Danielle	*****	<u>2/13/21</u>	<p>Black. The short stories and novella in the collection by Danielle Evans titled, <u>The Office of Historical Corrections</u>, reveals the wit, wisdom and struggles in contemporary American life. The finely written prose in this collection captures dialogue, mood, and struggle with precision. The strong Black female protagonists emerge from the shadows to reveal their experiences of what life is like for them. Evans conveys in each story some aspect of what these women face and how no matter what they do it never seems to be enough. Readers who enjoy finely written prose and stories packed with insight and wisdom are those most likely to enjoy this collection.</p>	
<u>The Light Ages: The Surprising Story of Medieval Science</u>	Falk, Seb	*****	<u>2/13/21</u>	<p>Westwyk. I learned a load of interesting stuff about medieval science as I read Seb Falk's book titled, <u>The Light Ages: The Surprising Story of Medieval Science</u>. Falk brings the topic to life through one scientist, John Westwyk, a talented inventor, astronomer, and master of the</p>	

				<p>astrolabe. We learn about how knowledge spread throughout the world during the Middle Ages. Falk pulls readers into monastic life and manuscripts and the ways in which the advancement of knowledge was encouraged. Westwyk comes across as the quintessential geek whose interests and tinkering would be recognized by scientists of any time period.</p> <p>Context. Until I read Paul Farmer's book titled, <u>Fevers, Feuds, and Diamonds: Ebola and the Ravages of History</u>, I thought I understood a lot about the 2014 Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea. Thanks to the context that Farmer provides in this book, it will be obvious to all readers that the situation in West Africa in 2014 was the consequence of hundreds of years of exploitation and injustice. He shows how the strategy of containment may have limited the spread of disease, but by not also focusing on medical care of patients, the people in this region (and others) do not have the health systems to address problems when they arise, let alone provide basic health care for people. Farmer writes with clarity and empathy, explaining history and medicine in terms that all readers can understand.</p>	
<u>Fevers, Feuds, and Diamonds: Ebola and the Ravages of History</u>	Farmer, Paul	*****	<u>6/8/21</u>		
<u>His & Hers</u>	Feeney, Alice	****	<u>1/26/21</u>	<p>Deception. Three narrators alternate chapters in Alice Feeney's psychological thriller titled, <u>His & Hers</u>. The plot will hook most readers quickly as we meet interesting and complex characters and develop suspicions about almost all of them. We find ample motivation in lots of characters to commit murder, and not</p>	

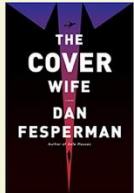
				many are eliminated from suspicion quickly. Readers who love plot twists and thrillers are those most likely to enjoy this exciting novel.	
<u>Rock Paper Scissors</u>	Feeney, Alice	****	<u>11/6/21</u>	<p>Lies. The plot twists are reason enough for thriller fans to pick up Alice Feeney's novel titled, <u>Rock Paper Scissors</u>. Something is not quite right in the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Wright. Adam is a screenwriter whose face blindness means he cannot recognize faces, even those closest to them. When the couple head to the Scottish Highlands, the lies in their marriage start to unravel, and Feeney offers readers one twist after another as the truth eludes us. The narrative proceeds from multiple perspectives and readers remain uncertain right to the end of the novel.</p>	
<u>Life Is in the Transitions: Mastering Change at Any Age</u>	Feiler, Bruce	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
<u>The Arab Winter: A Tragedy</u>	Feldman, Noah	****	<u>7/10/21</u>	<p>Collective. After I finally read Noah Feldman's book titled, <u>The Arab Winter: A Tragedy</u>, I realized what I had gleaned about the Arab Spring focused too much on Egypt, not enough on Tunisia, and I didn't reflect much about the consequences of the collective action of the citizens of multiple countries. Feldman has expanded my perspective on that region and the implications of collective action on what's likely to come next. Many of us may not have liked how the people in the region</p>	

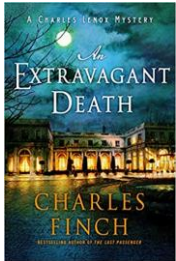
exercised their agency, but Feldman proposes that a future Arab Spring is more likely because the subservience of the people in the past to unrepresentative leaders may have changed for good.


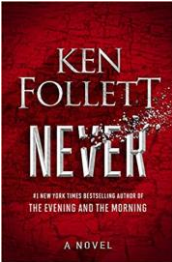
<u>Swimming Back to Trout River</u>	Feng, Linda Rui	****	<u>12/6/21</u>	<p>Separations. Linda Rui Feng's debut novel titled, <u>Swimming Back to Trout River</u>, uses the backdrop of the Cultural Revolution in China to pull readers into the stories of three generations in a family separated by the upheavals in society. Feng pulls readers into caring for each member of this family. Momo leaves wife, Cassia, and daughter, Junie, to stay with his parents in the small town where he was raised while he heads to America for a better life. Cassie also separates from Junie and her in-laws as she, too, leaves for America. A musician named Dawn from Momo's college days has also moved to the United States. Feng explores all these separations, the trauma and pain, with insight and understanding. The result is a finely told story that will resonate in special ways for all immigrants.</p>	
---	-----------------	------	--------------------------------	--	---

<u>How to Order the Universe</u>	Ferrada, María José	****	<u>7/10/21</u>	<p>Hardware. María José Ferrada's debut novel titled, <u>How to Order the Universe</u>, tells the story of a daughter and her father in Chile during the 1970s. Seven-year-old M loves when her father, D, takes her with him to hardware stores for his work as a salesman. We see the Pinochet era from M's perspective and feel a sense of wonder as they drive an old Renault from town to town. Even the durability of hardware cannot protect them from the waves of change. It is the lessons about the human</p>	
--	---------------------	------	--------------------------------	---	---

heart that M learns during her time on these sales routes, more valuable than what she would have learned in school. The simplicity of hardware contrasts with the complexity of the world.

<u>The Cover Wife</u>	Fesperman, Dan	****	<u>12/13/21</u>	<p>Hamburg. Fans of thrilling plots are those readers most likely to enjoy Dan Fesperman's novel titled, <u>The Cover Wife</u>. Set in Hamburg in 1999, this is a fictional take on the terrorist cell that a few years later participated in the 9/11 attacks. Protagonist Claire Saylor is a CIA agent who is sent undercover to try to find out what the terrorists are up to. We observe Claire's incredulity at her assignment, and we come to appreciate how frustrating life as a spy can be. Character development takes second place to plot momentum.</p>	
---------------------------------------	----------------	------	---------------------------------	--	---

<u>An Extravagant Death</u>	Finch, Charles	****	<u>5/27/21</u>	<p>Gilded. The fourteenth crime novel by Charles Finch featuring protagonist Charles Lenox is set in 1878 and titled, <u>An Extravagant Death</u>. Prime Minister Disraeli has a good reason for Lenox to be away from London, and thanks to advice from his wife, Lady Jane, Charles negotiates a trip to the United States as the representative of the Queen. On route from New York City to Boston, Lenox is lured to Newport, Rhode Island where a young woman has been murdered. Most of the action of the novel takes place in the Gilded Age cottages of the very wealthy. Readers even get to peek inside one of Lady Astor's balls. Fans of crime fiction will enjoy an engaging plot with a fascinating cast of characters. Finch leaves readers hanging at the end of this novel</p>	
---	----------------	------	--------------------------------	---	---

<p><u>Triple Chocolate Cheesecake Murder</u></p>	<p>Fluke, Joanne</p>	<p>***</p>	<p>about what Lenox will do next. Personally, I'm open to anything that this author dreams up for this finely drawn character.</p> <p>Coffee. Fans of cozy mysteries are those readers most likely to enjoy the series by Joanne Fluke set in Wisconsin featuring baker Hannah Swensen. In this latest installment, a novel titled, <u>Triple Chocolate Cheesecake Murder</u>, the familiar formula is carried out like a favorite recipe. There's lots of baking followed by massive consumption of sweet treats by a large cast of recurring characters. There's a murder that Hannah solves, of course. Every chapter provides recipes for the sweet treats that are made as the novel progresses. It might just be me, but a difference I noted in this novel was the volume of coffee that the characters guzzle. I've yet to bake any of the treats in these novels and have begun to think of this series as camp. I'm entertained mildly, even as I roll my eyes.</p>	
<p><u>Never</u></p>	<p>Follett, Ken</p>	<p>***</p>	<p>China. Just because you've enjoyed reading Ken Follett's historical fiction, it doesn't mean you'll like his take on contemporary global affairs in his eight-hundred-page novel titled, <u>Never</u>. The plot mix involves Islamic terrorists, North Korean misbehavior, and escalating tension between the United States and China. While the plot is thrilling and will engage most readers, the characters are rarely complex and the size of the novel means spending a lot of reading time with shallow individuals. Readers who like a thrilling plot and are patient with</p>	

incomplete character development are those most likely to enjoy this novel.

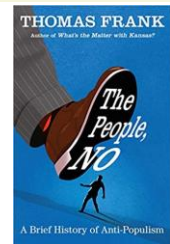
<u>Oranges and Lemons</u>	Fowler, Christopher	****	<u>3/25/21</u>	<p>Revival. Add together murders, nursery rhymes, and church bells and you have a case for London's Peculiar Crimes Unit. In the seventeenth installment of the Bryant and May series by Christopher Fowler, a novel titled, <u>Oranges and Lemons</u>, a case cries out for the PCU. But in the last installment, the unit was shut down. PCU chief Raymond Land is on the Isle of Wight, Arthur Bryant has been missing for at least a month, and John May is recovering from a bullet wound. Not only is the old team revived for this case, but a new and quite intriguing character is added to the cast. Fans of crime fiction, especially this series, are those readers who will enjoy this novel.</p>	
---------------------------	---------------------	------	----------------	---	---

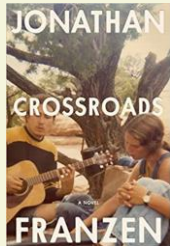
The People, NO: A Brief History of Anti-Populism

Frank, Thomas

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.



<u>Crossroads</u>	Franzen, Jonathan	*****	<u>11/6/21</u>	<p>Feast. A multi-course feast for readers who enjoy finely written literary fiction begins as Jonathan Franzen presents the first course, a novel titled, <u>Crossroads</u>, introducing the Hildebrandt family, mostly in the 1970s. Franzen polishes each family member's character through finely written dialogue, backstory, and omniscient revelation of deep inner lives. Russ Hildebrandt is a hapless associate pastor at a suburban Chicago Protestant church, and</p>	
-------------------	-------------------	-------	----------------	--	---

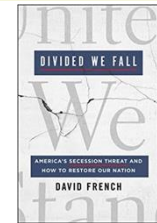
			<p>he becomes something of a comic foil through his foibles and weaknesses. His wife, Marian, entered their marriage with secrets, and the more we discover her depths, the more we appreciate her rage, no longer repressed. The children are each developed with empathy and insight and face their own setbacks. While the title refers to a teen group at the church, it also describes and presents the turning places for each family member of the course of this novel. I loved this first course and found Franzen more sympathetic to these characters than he'd been with earlier novels. The religious themes in this novel can be examined by any reader through additional reflection, and there should be plenty of time to digest this novel before we are presented with the next installment.</p>	
--	--	--	---	--

Divided We Fall:
America's
Secession Threat
and How to
Restore Our Nation

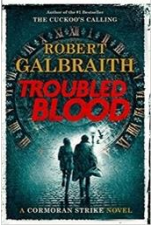
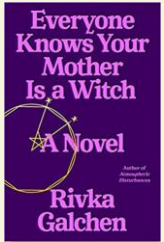
French, David

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.



<p><u>The Searcher</u></p>	<p>French, Tana</p>	<p>****</p>	<p><u>3/25/21</u></p> <p>Cal. Where would you go if you wanted to escape your present circumstances? In her crime novel titled, <u>The Searcher</u>, Tana French introduces protagonist Cal Hooper who needed to get away from an acrimonious divorce and a job that he no longer wanted to do. Cal chose the opposite of his life on the Chicago police force: retiring to a rural village in Ireland where he bought a fixer-upper. A young neighbor asks Cal to help find his brother who has gone missing. Before long, Cal</p>	
----------------------------	---------------------	-------------	--	--

				<p>finds himself in peril as his search for the missing person stirs up a mess that had been put to rest. As usual, French develops each character with great skill, and by the time the action for Cal reaches a critical point, we can anticipate how he will respond to what he learns during his search.</p>	
Troubled Blood	Galbraith, Robert	***	1/16/21	<p>Bloat. It can feel perfect to settle into a thousand-page novel knowing that the story to follow is likely to be interesting and engaging. I anticipated that feeling as I opened the fifth installment of the Cormoran Strike series that J.K. Rowling writes as Robert Galbraith, a novel titled, Troubled Blood. For a while it was satisfying to be back with Strike and Robin Ellacott as the detective partners took on a cold case. The middle five hundred or so pages of this novel felt like bloat to me as the exposition became a tad tedious and the various plot lines, investigations, and personal relationships moved at a glacial pace. Instead of setting the book aside, I slogged on to the end, and enjoyed the resolution of the main case. Readers who enjoy mysteries and this series are those most likely to enjoy this novel, especially if one can remain patient for just under a thousand pages.</p>	
Everyone Knows Your Mother Is a Witch	Galchen, Rivka	****	11/6/21	<p>Avarice. The sharp wit in Rivka Galchen's novel titled, Everyone Knows Your Mother Is a Witch, provides a balance to the exploration of avarice at the heart of the story. Galchen places neighbors underneath a high-powered microscope and reports what she observes with energy</p>	

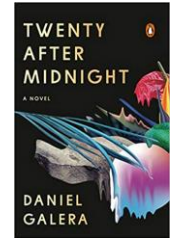
				and passion. While set in Germany in the 17 th century, aspects of this story are present in every contemporary subdivision, apartment building, or community group. Galchen's finely written prose will give reading pleasure to all fans of literary fiction, and her lessons about living alongside others will appeal to every reader.	
--	--	--	--	---	--

Twenty After Midnight

Galera, Daniel

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.



<u>The Promise</u>	Galgut, Damon	*****	<u>11/16/21</u>	<p>Inheritance. Damon Galgut won the 2021 Booker Prize for his novel titled, <u>The Promise</u>. This family saga set in South Africa focuses on a farm, a house and an inheritance, told over the course of time and four funerals. We watch the end of apartheid through the decline in the Swart family. We watch their suffering and loss from a rot at the core of their lives. We watch the progression of moral bankruptcy as they try to hold on to what cannot be. Galgut takes us beneath the surface in every scene to examine what's really going on whether we want to see it or not. Fans of literary fiction are those readers most likely to enjoy this award-winning novel.</p>	
--------------------	---------------	-------	-----------------	---	--

Bunker: Building for the End Times

Garrett, Bradley

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.

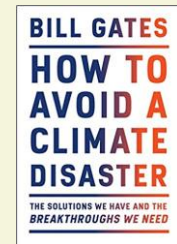


How to Avoid a Climate Disaster: The Solutions We Have and the Breakthroughs We Need

Gates, Bill

5/14/21

Steps. General audiences can learn a lot about our climate crisis from Bill Gates' book titled, How to Avoid a Climate Disaster: The Solutions We Have and the Breakthroughs We Need. Gates approaches the subject in an organized and disciplined manner. He examines efforts that are currently underway, examines how the situation has changed, and outlines a variety of practical solutions, many of which are underway. Power Point fans will be pleased that there are charts to examine. There's optimism on the pages of this book, and a real sense that we can act in ways that produce success.

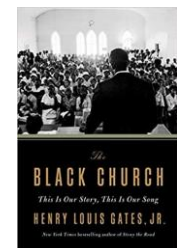


The Black Church: This Is Our Story, This Is Our Song

Gates, Henry Louis

6/19/21

Center. In his book titled, The Black Church: This Is Our Story, This Is Our Song, Henry Louis Gates describes the myriad ways in which the Black Church in the United States has been the center of life for Black Americans. The form of that centrality has varied across time and place. Sometimes the church was a needed source of refuge. Other times, it was the place to go to mobilize with others for change. Always, it was a place for expression in words and songs the joy and pain of the people in the community. Whatever issues needed to be faced, the place for the community to come together has been the church. Readers of this book



are treated to Gates' own story, the stories of many others, and a clear-eyed examination of this important part of American life.

<p><u>The Bomber Mafia: A Dream, a Temptation, and the Longest Night of the Second World War</u></p>	<p>Gladwell, Malcolm</p>	<p>*****</p>	<p><u>5/14/21</u></p> <p>Precision. I savor those times when a book leads me to question my thinking. I've always thought that indiscriminate bombing in war was wrong, and that precision should be deployed to avoid civilian deaths. During World War II, I considered the precision bombing efforts by General Haywood Hansell to be morally superior to the widespread and intense method deployed by General Curtis LeMay. After reading Malcolm Gladwell's book titled, <u>The Bomber Mafia: A Dream, a Temptation, and the Longest Night of the Second World War</u>, I can understand that LeMay's massive bombing may have ultimately saved lives and represented a moral choice that could be viewed more favorably than I thought. While LeMay's tactics replaced Hansell's during World War II, precision bombing has since prevailed. Readers interested in this subject should enjoy this thoughtful book, which I recommend in the audio version, which was the original format used by Gladwell, and uses historical audio to supplement the text.</p>	
<p><u>Winter Recipes from the Collective</u></p>	<p>Glück, Louise</p>	<p>*****</p>	<p><u>12/6/21</u></p> <p>Mortality. Ever since she won the 2020 Nobel Prize in Literature, I've been meaning to read Louise Glück's poetry. I finally took the time to do that in the form of her new collection titled, <u>Winter Recipes from the Collective</u>. This collection did exactly what I want poetry to do for me. I</p>	

slowed down and listened. The images launched me toward deeper thoughts about important stuff. Throughout this collection, I was drawn into the fragility and vulnerability of life, our certain mortality, and the uncertainty we feel about the changes we know we will face. If you're ready for some intensity and seriousness, consider reading these finely crafted poems.

<p><u>Citizen Reporters: S.S. McClure, Ida Tarbell, and the Magazine that Rewrote America</u></p>	<p>Gorton, Stephanie</p>	<p>*****</p>	<p><u>5/6/21</u></p> <p>McClure's. Stephanie Gorton's book titled, <u>Citizen Reporters: S.S. McClure, Ida Tarbell, and the Magazine that Rewrote America</u>, balances a narrative about a distinctive era with a handful of characters whose influence has endured for at least a century. Gorton describes the rise and fall of <i>McClure's</i>, a popular magazine in the early 20th century that launched investigative journalism. We get to know S.S. McClure, his best journalist, Ida Tarbell, along with writers Ray Stannard Baker and Lincoln Steffens, who together established a foothold for investigate journalism in American democracy. Readers who love this period in American history will find a lot to enjoy in this engaging book.</p>	
<p><u>Before the Ruins</u></p>	<p>Gosling, Victoria</p>	<p>*****</p>	<p><u>6/19/21</u></p> <p>Pursuit. After you read Victoria Gosling's finely written debut novel titled, <u>Before the Ruins</u>, you can decide whether the complex story, multiple timelines and perspectives about modern life pay off for you. We gradually learn about five key characters, what happened in the past and why one character has now gone missing. A game played by the characters as</p>	

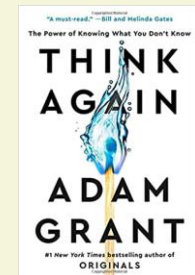
children involving a lost diamond necklace, fake for the game, and possibly a real one to be discovered, takes form in different ways in the past and in the present. Life is often not what we want it to be, and frequently not at all like the one we dreamed of while young and naïve. Gosling uses this complex structure and interesting characters to help us think about how we became who we are, and how we feel about how our lives have turned out.

Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know

Grant, Adam

2/23/21

Flexibility. As of today, I consider Wharton professor Adam Grant's book titled, Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know, to be wise, thoughtful and helpful to any general reader. Of course, thanks to what I read in this book, I'm very likely to reconsider my view and revise my assessment. Grant explores the importance of mental flexibility and humility in facing what we don't know. He offers processes that can improve the ways in which we can use the approach of a scientist in more dimensions of life. Examine what works and revise multiple times as new data becomes available. In other words, remain flexible. Don't get stuck, but actively unlearn things and relearn based on the current situation. Ask questions about why you do what you do every day. Start feeling good when you see where you are wrong. That's an opportunity not a shortcoming. Misplaced confidence leads to heading in the wrong direction. Any reader who thinks he or she has an open mind may think again after reading this engaging and useful book.

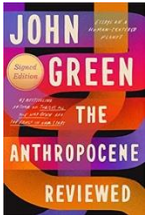


The Anthropocene Reviewed: Essays on a Human-Centered Planet

Green, John

7/10/21

Ratings. Prepare to fall in love with the world as you read John Green’s brief essays in a collection titled, The Anthropocene Reviewed: Essays on a Human-Centered Planet. Green’s observations about our world are cogent, quirky, often humorous, and always packed with insight. In addition to presenting his observations, he also provides ratings on a five-star scale. Green exposes his personal weaknesses, vulnerabilities, and past and present insecurities and neuroses. Thanks to his fine writing, and clear-headed observations, most readers will find great pleasure in his ratings about our world and will gently add our own ratings and observations.

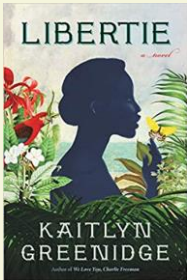


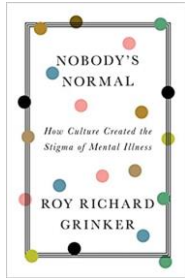
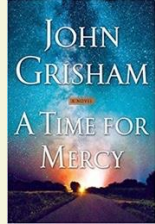
Libertie

Greenidge, Kaitlyn

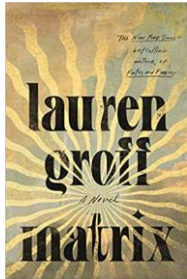
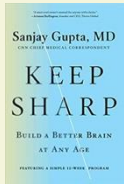
6/24/21

Freedom. The story of Libertie Sampson in Kaitlyn Greenidge’s novel titled, Libertie, will encourage readers to stand taller and to pursue the life we desire. The core question in the novel involves where we find freedom. Libertie’s mother works as a physician in Brooklyn in a free Black community just after the Civil War. Libertie wants to escape her mother’s vision that she train as a doctor to work alongside her and instead pursue her interest in music. After a man from Haiti promises her a life of freedom married to him, she finds his expectation of her subordination to be another form of bondage. She searches again for freedom in motherhood, and wonders where a Black woman can find freedom. Fans of historical fiction will enjoy this finely



				<p>written novel and become entranced by Libertie and root for her freedom.</p> <p>Neurodiversity. Roy Richard Grinker writes about culture and mental illness from a place where he has lived at the intersection of both. In his book titled, <u>Nobody's Normal: How Culture Created the Stigma of Mental Illness</u>, Grinker explores changing attitudes about mental illness over time, and overlays his personal connection to the topic. As an anthropologist, Grinker brings an expertise about culture to the conversation. As the son and grandson of prominent psychiatrists, he knows the history of that profession from both an academic and personal perspective. Finally, as the father of a daughter with autism, he understands the spectrum that represents human neurodiversity. Grinker examines the aspect of stigma and examines the ways in which culture can transform.</p>	
<p><u>Nobody's Normal: How Culture Created the Stigma of Mental Illness</u></p>	Grinker, Roy Richard	*****	10/8/21		
<p><u>A Time for Mercy</u></p>	Grisham, John	*****	1/5/21	<p>Defense. The third novel by John Grisham featuring Clanton, Mississippi lawyer Jake Brigance is titled, <u>A Time for Mercy</u>. The local judge has appointed Jake to defend a teenage boy who shot and killed a popular police officer. Jake doesn't want to take the case, and this temporary appointment becomes permanent after no one else will defend the young man. The small town expects swift justice and a death penalty sentence, and Jake's popularity and business activity declines after he takes on the case. Before long, Jake sees the case from another</p>	

				<p>perspective, and he ends up risking his financial security during his defense. Fans of Grisham are those readers most likely to enjoy this legal thriller, full of heart about characters who pop out on the page to settle into our own hearts as we care deeply about what happens to them.</p>	
Sooley	Grisham, John	*****	6/24/21	<p>Basketball. While I have no interest in basketball, I have often enjoyed John Grisham's novels, so I opened a copy of his book titled, Sooley. Before long I was caught up in the story of Samuel Sooleymon, a young man from South Sudan, who gets the chance to play basketball in the United States. Grisham contrasts the break that Sooley gets with the situation in South Sudan. Most readers will become caught up in this moving story and with this charismatic character.</p>	
The Judge's List	Grisham, John	*****	11/22/21	<p>Patience. Three compelling main characters and a thrilling plot combine into an exciting novel by John Grisham titled, The Judge's List. Lacy Stoltz was a character in an earlier Grisham novel, and he loves her like a favorite child in putting her at the center of this novel. In her work for the Florida Judicial Review Board, she's approached anonymously by Jeri Crosby with a shocking accusation: a sitting Florida judge is a serial killer. Jeri's father was a victim of this judge's revenge, and Jeri presents Lacy with the results of two decades of dogged investigation presenting her case against the judge. The judge has carefully planned his murders, waiting patiently until the circumstances allow him to act on his own careful terms.</p>	

<u>Matrix</u>	Groff, Lauren	*****	<u>11/6/21</u>	<p>Fans of crime fiction are those readers most likely to enjoy this exciting novel.</p> <p>Marie. Fans of compelling and complex fictional characters are those readers who will love Marie, the protagonist of Lauren Groff's novel titled, <u>Matrix</u>. Marie is the half-sister of Eleanor of Aquitaine who has dismissed the seventeen-year-old from the royal court and sends her to join a remote group of impoverished nuns. Marie thrives in the abbey where her leadership transforms the community and builds self-sufficiency. Groff imagines all that a woman could accomplish in the 12th century within an abbey free from life with men. The prose is finely written, and medieval life comes alive on these pages. Readers who enjoy historical fiction, especially with strong female characters, are those most likely to enjoy this novel.</p>	
<u>Keep Sharp: Build a Better Brain at Any Age</u>	Gupta, Sanjay	****	<u>5/27/21</u>	<p>Practical. Neurologist and CNN correspondent Sanjay Gupta offers practical advice to general readers in his book titled, <u>Keep Sharp: Build a Better Brain at Any Age</u>. Gupta describes what scientists have learned about the brain and what their findings mean for maintaining one's cognitive health. Spoiler alert: there's no magic pill and yes, diet and exercise are recommended. Many readers will enjoy the way Gupta debunks long held myths about the brain. Readers of any age will gain some practical advice from this informative book.</p>	

World War C: Lessons from the Covid-19 Pandemic and How to Prepare for the Next One

Gupta, Sanjay

11/22/21

Diagnosis. Two questions remained unresolved for me after I read Sanjay Gupta's book titled, World War C: Lessons from the Covid-19 Pandemic and How to Prepare for the Next One. First, is it still too soon in the progression of the pandemic to be able to learn lessons? Second, can lessons be learned in an environment where we don't share a common fact base? Despite still having those questions, I enjoyed Gupta's diagnosis and prescription. He writes with clarity for general audiences and offers any reader with an interest in this subject a thoughtful assessment of where we've been and where we need to go.



One of Our Own

Haddam, Jane

3/18/21

Phily. Fans of Jane Haddam's series featuring protagonist Gregor Demarkian will be excited to read the 30th installment, a novel titled, One of Our Own. The former FBI agent serves as a police consultant while living with his wife in an Armenian neighborhood in Philadelphia. The lively cast of characters brings the neighborhood to life. Gregor is asked to assist in a case involving murder in his neighborhood. This finely written novel is an upbeat and hopeful ending to a beloved series and a tribute to the vitality of one Phily neighborhood as a model for every place in the world to emulate.



The Comfort Book

Haig, Matt


9/23/21

Hope. During the darkest periods of life, it can be difficult to find hope. Matt Haig understands depression and darkness from his own life experience, and he offers a quirky book of fragments titled, The Comfort Book, as a form of inspiration to



others that life will get better. Readers may connect with some nuggets, roll eyes at some aphorisms, reject parts as irrelevant, and find comfort and hope from unexpected places. Reading this book is like getting a big hug. Who can't use an extra hug?

<u>The Midnight Library</u>	Haig, Matt	*****	<u>1/16/21</u>	<p>Turns. In Matt Haig's imaginative novel titled, <u>The Midnight Library</u>, protagonist Nora Seed gets multiple chances to lead a fulfilled life. She visits a magical library that contains an infinite number of volumes about a possible life she could live if she just made one tweak at some turning point in her past. What would any of us do differently if we could? How would the stories of our lives play out had we done one thing versus something else? What are we looking for out of life, and where do we find satisfaction and fulfillment? Haig writes with delicacy and whimsy, leaving most readers uplifted about life after reading this novel.</p>	
<u>And Now She's Gone</u>	Hall, Rachel Howzell	*****	<u>9/23/21</u>	<p>Gray. Private eye Grayson Sykes gets her first solo assignment: finding somebody's missing girlfriend. In her novel titled, <u>And Now She's Gone</u>, Rachel Howzell Hall developed Sykes with complexity, and offers a thrilling crime novel. Somehow Hall is able to place abuse and humor within the confines of the same page, and we appreciate both. The search for the missing woman becomes more complicated with every plot twist, and Hall keeps us interested in both the case and in Gray Sykes. Fans of crime fiction are those</p>	

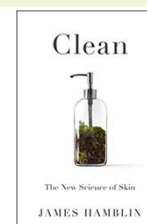
<u>The Case of the Reincarnated Client</u>	Hall, Tarquin	****	<u>1/26/21</u>	<p>readers most likely to enjoy this exciting and finely written novel.</p> <p>Memory. The fifth Vish Puri novel by Tarquin Hall is titled, <u>The Case of the Reincarnated Client</u>. This time out, India's Most Private Detective juggles two cases. His indefatigable Mummy-ji provides both impetus and wisdom especially in a case from the past that had once been investigated by Puri's father. Hall focuses our attention on memory and recollection in this installment, and fans of Chubby's gustatory exploits will be alarmed by one scene in which Puri actually seems to have lost his appetite. Readers who enjoy crime fiction, especially this series, are those most likely to enjoy this entertaining novel.</p>	
--	---------------	------	--------------------------------	---	---

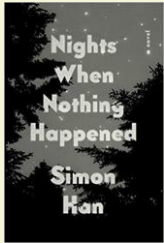
[Clean: The New Science of Skin and the Beauty of Doing Less](#)

Hamblin, James

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.



<u>Nights When Nothing Happened</u>	Han, Simon	****	<u>6/19/21</u>	<p>Touch. I rarely tire of finely written novels that offer a view of the world from a perspective unlike my own. Simon Han's debut novel titled, <u>Nights When Nothing Happened</u>, explores the immigrant experience in the China to Texas version. Han describes the longing to find one's place in a community that was made for others. The importance of touch as Han presents his story resonated in a special way following many months of pandemic isolation. The tenderness expressed during a sleepwalking motif provided deep</p>	
---	------------	------	--------------------------------	--	---

				<p>understanding of family dynamics. Han's prose draws readers into the intimacy of family relationships and the impact of past trauma on the challenges of assimilation, feeling safe and finding a new home in a strange land.</p>	
<p><u>The Killings at Kingfisher Hill</u></p>	<p>Hannah, Sophie</p>	<p>****</p>	<p><u>1/5/21</u></p>	<p>Puzzle. The fourth installment of the new Hercule Poirot mystery series by Sophie Hannah is a novel titled, <u>The Killings at Kingfisher Hill</u>. The familiar and beloved detective performs exactly as expected within a twisting plot that will satisfy most mystery fans. I found a few of the supporting characters to be interesting and complex, while most provided a bit of backdrop, but little depth. What most of us mystery readers want is a good puzzle, and I found this one satisfying.</p>	
<p><u>The Sweetness of Water</u></p>	<p>Harris, Nathan</p>	<p>****</p>	<p><u>9/8/21</u></p>	<p>Uncertainty. Now what? In his debut novel titled, <u>The Sweetness of Water</u>, Nathan Harris takes readers to rural Georgia as the Civil War ends and every character feels uncertain about how to answer the question about what happens next. Every character takes a tentative step into the future. Hope and fear travel side by side. Memories of past trauma remain vivid. Healing may be possible. It doesn't take many pages for readers to feel deeply about these complex characters and observe unflinchingly what they need to do to survive and thrive.</p>	

A Study in Crimson

Harris, Robert J.

12/13/21

Sherlock. The first time I encountered the world's greatest detective, Sherlock Holmes, was in the film version set in the 1940s and featuring Basil Rathbone as Holmes. Robert J. Harris chose 1942 London as the setting for his own Sherlock tribute, a novel titled, A Study in Crimson. Scotland Yard is stumped by a killer who is murdering women on the same dates that Jake the Ripper killed in 1888, so they turn to Sherlock Holmes for help. Fans of crime fiction homage are those most likely to enjoy this novel.



The Other Black Girl

Harris, Zakiya Dalila

8/19/21

Racism. The protagonist of Zakiya Dalila Harris' debut novel titled, The Other Black Girl, works as an editorial assistant at prestigious publisher Wagner Books. Twenty-six-year-old Nella Rogers feels a heavy burden in the workplace as the sole Black employee and she's frustrated that there's little appetite among her bosses and coworkers for eliminating the forms of racism she experiences on the job. Harris disrupts the status quo by adding another young Black woman to the workplace mix. Hazel makes an immediate impact at Wagner, but Nella finds herself torn on whether the situation is better or worse for her own career. The plot is thrilling, and the satire is sharp.

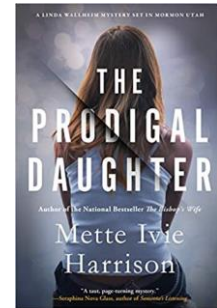


The Prodigal Daughter

Harrison, Mette Ivie

7/10/21

Disillusionment. The tone of the fifth installment of the Linda Wallheim Mystery Series by Mette Ivie Harrison turns dark. In the novel titled, The Prodigal Daughter, Linda and her Mormon bishop husband, Kurt, have started marriage counseling because with their five sons out of the house, and a bunch of other changes, they are going through a rough patch. Thanks to son Joseph's request for Linda to find a missing babysitter named Sabrina, Linda gets out of the house, but she retains her disillusionment with her life and with the church. After she finds the missing girl, she learns that Sabrina had been gang raped by a group of good Mormon boys. Linda's darkness grows deeper as she grapples with the likelihood that justice will not prevail. Harrison presents a more complicated Linda in this novel, and she has become more real and interesting as a result. Fans of the series may feel bummed with the turn in Linda's life, but hope that the next installment will move in a direction that pulls Linda out of the darkness.



No Rules Rules:
Netflix and the
Culture of
Reinvention

Hastings, Reed and
Erin Meyer

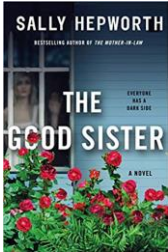
2/13/21

Upended. Most managers who read Reed Hastings' book titled, No Rules Rules: Netflix and the Culture of Reinvention, will feel a bit uncomfortable. When co-author Erin Meyer weighs in with her expertise about corporate culture, many more managers will begin to squirm. This book upends many management practices that are widely followed and explains why there's another way that produces outstanding results. There's a ruthless

NO RULES
RULES
NETFLIX
and the
Culture of
Reinvention
REED
HASTINGS
ERIN
MEYER

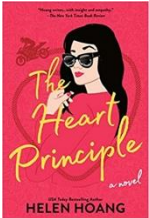
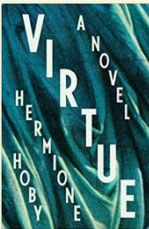
				<p>quality that some readers will sense in seeing the consequence of hiring the best, paying them at top of market, adjusting pay regularly to market, and providing generous severance when they are no longer “the best,” is that employees can become one more disposable asset. Other readers will see the value that comes from empowering individuals to make decisions without bureaucratic red tape. For some people, working at Netflix must be a dream come true, while for others it would be a nightmare. Read the book and figure out which side you fall on, and whether some of Netflix’ management practices might work at your company.</p>	
<u>A Bright Ray of Darkness</u>	Hawke, Ethan	****	<u>3/9/21</u>	<p>Hotspur. Readers can feel deeply the anguish of the protagonist of Ethan Hawke’s novel titled, <u>A Bright Ray of Darkness</u>. He is a film actor making his Broadway debut in Shakespeare’s Henry IV, playing the role of Hotspur. His marriage has fallen apart, and he falls easily into self-destructive behavior. He often seems clueless, as Hawke pulls readers into the world of the theater, this play, the actors in a philosophical examination of art and the life of the artist.</p>	
<u>A Slow Fire Burning</u>	Hawkins, Paula	****	<u>9/23/21</u>	<p>Broken. There’s a fascinating cast of broken characters in Paula Hawkins’ murder mystery titled, <u>A Slow Fire Burning</u>. Along the journey to discover who murdered a young man and why, we learn about the lives of a half dozen characters, each of whom has been broken in their lives. Hawkins explores grief and its long-term effect on multiple characters.</p>	


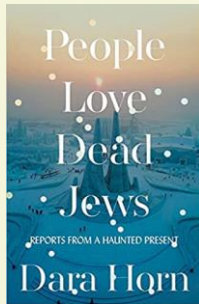
			<p>She allows multiple characters to present their versions of the story, and gradually we come to an understanding about their lives and some reasons why they acted in the ways they did. Fans of crime thrillers may find a slower than usual pace in this novel, but the characters are the treat here: complex individuals moving through life with heavy burdens to carry.</p>	
<u>The Tyranny of Big Tech</u>	Hawley, Josh	****	<p><u>6/24/21</u></p> <p>Reforms. I'm always on the lookout for ways to achieve progress in solving national problems that bring together allies across the complete spectrum from left to right. I was delighted to find a glimmer of hope in Josh Hawley's book titled, <u>The Tyranny of Big Tech</u>. I can imagine legislation that Hawley, Amy Klobuchar and Elizabeth Warren could co-sponsor to reform the way the United States deals with companies that dominate sectors of the economy. I encourage readers to keep an open mind to hear the views Hawley raises in this book, and then to read Klobuchar's book titled, <u>Antitrust: Taking on Monopoly Power from the Gilded Age to the Digital Age</u>.</p>	
<u>Early Morning Riser</u>	Heiny, Katherine	****	<p><u>5/27/21</u></p> <p>Sweet. Katherine Heiny's novel titled, <u>Early Morning Riser</u>, could have gone off the rails in many different ways. With just a few tweaks, we could find ourselves laughing at these characters rather than with them. She could have skipped the complexity she layers in each character, and we would not have recognized them as complicated people, just like us. The lightness of the story could have become too saccharine to penetrate our senses;</p>	

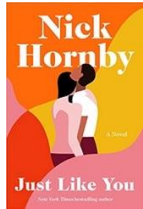
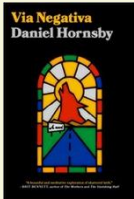
				<p>instead, we receive a story that is sweet in just the right ways. I felt better about the world and the people in it after reading this novel. That's a tribute to this fine writer whose wisdom about life fills these pages.</p> <p>Snapshots. Any reader whose summers were defined by leaving one's regular house for a summer home will resonate with how much meaning and how many of life's pivotal events can take place in such a setting. In her novel titled, <u>The Paper Palace</u>, Miranda Cowley Heller moves the narrative back and forth in time, slowly revealing, like flipping snapshots, the secrets of protagonist Ella's summer home which was called the paper palace. Some of the snapshots reveal joy and humor while others display abuse. We find love and violence, fidelity and betrayal. Isn't that the usual story at the summer house?</p>	
<u>The Paper Palace</u>	Heller, Miranda Cowley	****	<u>10/8/21</u>		
<u>The WEIRDest People in the World: How the West Became Psychologically Peculiar and Particularly Prosperous</u>	Henrich, Joseph	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
<u>The Good Sister</u>	Hepworth, Sally	****	<u>6/24/21</u>	<p>Twins. The protagonists of Sally Hepworth's novel titled, <u>The Good Sister</u>, are fraternal twins Fern and Rose. Hepworth captures readers in just a few pages as we want to learn more about these women. Before long, we feel like we are inside their family and beginning to understand their interpersonal dynamics.</p>	

After not very long, we realize that there are family secrets that have been long held, and we begin to see Fern and Rose in new ways. Hepworth's prose is finely written, and her insight into human behavior resonates.

Slough House	Herron, Mick	****	6/8/21	<p>Erased. The seventh installment of Mick Herron's series featuring the MI5 spies who are surplus to requirements is titled after the series, Slough House. Strong satire bites sharply on these pages, as news is manipulated, and MI5 has been used for private purposes. Internal politics has led to the erasure of Slough House in the MI5 records. Jackson Lamb, however, knows how to play an inside game. Amid deaths, diversions, lies and power grabs, Lamb finds a path toward survival for him and for most of the Slough House rejects.</p>	
The Vapors: A Southern Family, the New York Mob, and the Rise and Fall of America's Forgotten Capital of Vice	Hill, David	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
Clark and Division	Hirahara, Naomi	****	9/23/21	<p>Investigation. Naomi Hirahara's novel titled, Clark and Division, pulls readers into an investigation into a death in Chicago in 1944 that introduced me to things most readers probably don't know about Chicago during World War II. Inspired by historical events, Hirahara tells us about the lives of Japanese Americans who went from productive lives to internment to resettlement far away from their former homes. Protagonist Aki</p>	

				<p>Ito and her parents arrive in Chicago to join Aki's sister Rose who arrived before them. Just before their arrival, Rose was killed by a subway train. Twenty-year-old Aki wants to find out the truth about Rose's death which was ruled suicide. Fans of mysteries will love the investigation. Readers who enjoy historical fiction will enjoy learning about the lives of Japanese Americans in Chicago in 1944.</p>	
<u>The Heart Principle</u>	Hoang, Helen	*****	11/16/21	<p>Spectrum. Helen Hoang continues to present characters on the autism spectrum to readers of her novels. In her book titled, <u>The Heart Principle</u>, we find concert violinist Anna facing burnout. After her boyfriend surprises her that he wants to pursue an open relationship before committing to each other, Anna decides she wants an open relationship as well. What follows is a story of finding true love, taking on roles that are difficult, and retaining one's individuality within a family.</p>	
<u>Virtue</u>	Hoby, Hermoine	*****	10/15/21	<p>Privilege. In Hermoine Hoby's novel titled, <u>Virtue</u>, we meet two interns working in New York City for an elite magazine. Twenty-two-year-old protagonist Luca finds himself drawn toward a wealthy couple, she a prominent artist and he a filmmaker, and he finds himself welcomed into their privileged lives. Intern Zara arrived at the magazine speaking candidly about injustice and creating tension in the offices of the magazine. Luca's attraction to the allure of privilege distracted him into complacency about the actions that Zara pursues with passion. Hoby contrasts</p>	

				<p>Luca and Zara in ways that lay bare the shallowness or depth of social activism in recent years. We observe choices with consequences and the ways in which young adults search for their place in the world.</p> <p>Intensity. Protagonist Ari Eden finds his life turned upside down after his family moves from their insular ultra-Orthodox Brooklyn neighborhood to the fleshpots of Florida, even inside the walls of the Jewish academy where he faces his senior year in high school. The debut novel titled, <u>The Orchard</u>, by David Hopen captures the essence of adolescence and the intensity of life among a small group of smart and privileged friends. Prompted by a charismatic rabbi, the students examine their religion and philosophy in ways that disturb their comfort. Ari's reinvention in Florida feels nothing like the life he left behind in Brooklyn. Many readers will finish this novel thinking about divine intervention and suffering as well as the resilience of youth.</p>	
<u>The Orchard</u>	Hopen, David	****	<u>4/13/21</u>		
<u>People Love Dead Jews: Reports from a Haunted Present</u>	Horn, Dara	****	<u>11/16/21</u>	<p>Disturbing. The best essayists challenge our thinking and demand that we look at those things that are important. Dara Horn's critical essays in a collection titled, <u>People Love Dead Jews: Reports from a Haunted Present</u>, disturbed me and challenged me. Horn takes on lies and hypocrisy with focus and insight. She uses anger as power to strengthen her prose and succeeds with great skill in making her critical case. If you are open to the notion of structural racism, Horn makes a compelling case for the global prevalence</p>	

				<p>of structural anti-Semitism. Horn's passion, scholarship, and insight make these essays important reading that leads a reader toward deeper understanding.</p>	
Just Like You	Hornby, Nick	****	2/4/21	<p>Tender. Nick Hornby offers up for readers a novel titled, Just Like You, a romance overflowing with tenderness. The couple is an unlikely match: 42-year-old Lucy and 22-year-old Joseph. She's a White, divorced mother of two boys. He's a Black aspiring musician who first met her when he worked in the local butcher shop. Love can overcome lots of obstacles, and the use of text messages in the narrative highlights the age difference between the protagonists. I was receptive for a big-hearted story, and this novel fit the bill perfectly.</p>	
Via Negativa	Hornsby, Daniel	****	3/9/21	<p>Priest. Chances are readers have never met a priest quite like Father Dan, the protagonist of Daniel Hornsby's debut novel titled, Via Negativa. Retired and no longer welcomed by the bishop of his Midwestern diocese, Father Dan points his Toyota Camry west and begins a journey with a few touchpoint connections to his past along the way. As if living in a car wasn't enough, Dan sees a coyote hit by a minivan that doesn't stop, so he patches up the wild animal, and secures the animal to the back car seat, adding to the malodorous ambience of life inside the Camry. His encounters along the road are full of interest for readers, and the whole nature of contemplation and reconciliation with one's past gets played out for all to examine. There's humor sitting beside</p>	

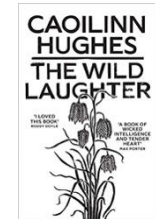
				<p>tragedy in the vignettes of the journey, and we gradually gain insight into Father Dan and his demons.</p> <p>Clever. Readers who love clever crime fiction are those most likely to enjoy the second installment in the Magpie Murders series by Anthony Horowitz, a novel titled, Moonflower Murders. Detective Atticus Pund returns along with publisher Susan Ryeland for a murder mystery packed with twists and the bonus of a novel within the novel. Horowitz' writing gives me great reading pleasure, and I always feel respected as a reader that I am expected to engage my brain as the story unfolds.</p>	
Moonflower Murders	Horowitz, Anthony	****	2/23/21		
Clutter: An Untidy History	Howard, Jennifer	****	2/4/21	<p>Stuff. Most of us have a lot of stuff. Some of us become overwhelmed when there is too much stuff for us to deal with. In her book titled, Clutter: An Untidy History, Jennifer Howard explores issues including hoarding, consumerism, the prevalence of big box stores and her personal experience in spending huge amounts of time dealing with all the stuff in her mother's house. She helps us examine how and why we end up accumulating so much stuff, and the challenges we all face as we receive and dispose of things. While I read this book, I thought of a friend who recently mentioned her supply of about 1,000 face masks, and how much longer we will be likely to wear them. The day after I finished reading this book, a photo on the cover of a Toronto newspaper showed a littered cityscape full of discarded masks. This book will appeal to both neat freaks and collectors of all sorts of stuff.</p>	

The Wild Laughter

Hughes, Caoilinn

2/13/21

Unmoored. Sure if it wasn't for dark humor in Ireland, we'd have no humor at all. Caoilinn Hughes brought me laughter and sadness as she presents the travails of the Black family in her novel titled, The Wild Laughter. Set in 2008, we meet paterfamilias Chief facing bleak times, his children engaged in sibling rivalry, and all the man wants to do is die. Hughes is a sharp observer of family devastation, and her prose sings on these pages as she encourages both smiles and tears.



Zorrie

Hunt, Laird

12/13/21

Glow. If you've ever found yourself standing before a portrait painting and wondering what the subject's life was like, you're likely to enjoy the compact yet sweeping story of protagonist Zorrie Underwood in Laird Hunt's novel titled, Zorrie. We find Zorrie in Depression-era rural Indiana, orphaned first when her parents died, and abandoned again when the aunt who took her in also died. We watch her scrap together a life, finding her place in the world, glowing for real when dusted with radium from the plant where she finds a job. Laird gives us a complete life to ponder in this novel, and the resulting portrait is a masterpiece.

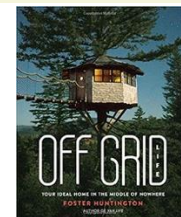



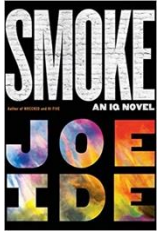
Off Grid Life: Your Ideal Home in the Middle of Nowhere

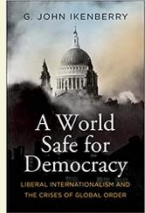
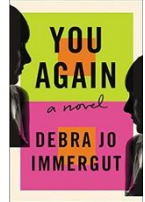
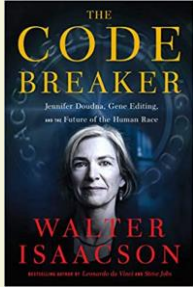
Huntington, Foster

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.



<u>Prodigal Son</u>	Hurwitz, Gregg	****	<u>3/9/21</u>	<p>Mother. With each installment of Gregg Hurwitz' series of novels featuring Orphan X, Evan Smoak, we learn more about this character and his depth and complexity evolves. In the sixth novel titled, <u>Prodigal Son</u>, Evan meets the woman who gave birth to him and gave him up for adoption. All of a sudden, Evan's orderly world has turned upside down. The action and technology in this novel make for exciting reading, and a reader's tension remains taut after the last page is read. Fans of the series are those most likely to enjoy this installment, and new readers can enjoy this as a standalone story, then devour the earlier novels to get to know this fascinating protagonist.</p>	
<u>Smoke</u>	Ide, Joe	****	<u>5/6/21</u>	<p>Installment. Some novelists who present books with recurring characters build stand-alone pieces that are enhanced for those fans who read every installment. I found that the fifth novel by Joe Ide featuring private detective Isaiah Quintabe titled, <u>Smoke</u>, feels like a middle piece in a set: you really need to understand what came before and know that something else will need to follow. I've enjoyed this series, especially protagonist I.Q., and was entertained by the expanded cast of characters in this novel. First time readers may want to be introduced to I.Q. through the earlier novels in this series. In the current installment, I.Q. is on the run from something that happened in the last novel, so his profile abides more in the shadows than on the center stage in this entertaining crime novel.</p>	

<u>A World Safe for Democracy: Liberal Internationalism and the Crises of Global Order</u>	Ikenberry, G. John	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
<u>You Again</u>	Immergut, Debra Jo	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
<u>The Code Breaker: Jennifer Doudna, Gene Editing, and the Future of the Human Race</u>	Isaacson, Walter	*****	<u>4/22/21</u>	<p>CRISPR. If you don't think gene editing is exciting, you will after reading Walter Isaacson's book titled, <u>The Code Breaker: Jennifer Doudna, Gene Editing, and the Future of the Human Race</u>, in which he presents the history of CRISPR (clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats) and its many applications to date. Isaacson's personal excitement about this subject appears on every page, as he introduces us to scientists, their methods, and their achievements. Readers quickly become engaged in the process of unlocking the mysteries of nature. We see the ways in which curiosity will literally save us. We learn how we reach the future one step at a time. The liveliness of the narrative becomes enhanced as we get to know Jennifer Doudna, her fellow Nobel Prize winner, Emmanuelle Charpentier, their many colleagues and competitors, and learn about the race to provide applications for their research, including a vaccine to treat COVID-19.</p>	

[Klara and the Sun](#)

Ishiguro, Kazuo

[6/8/21](#)

Hope. I confess to rolling my eyes when I heard that the protagonist of Kazuo Ishiguro's novel titled, [Klara and the Sun](#), was an Artificial Friend. Shame on me for thinking this was about robots or artificial intelligence. Before long, I found myself thinking about what it means to love. I observed Klara's hope as a model for how each of us can live life fully. Klara is voice that most readers will remember fondly after reading this magnificent novel.

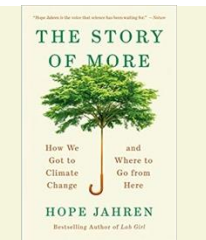


[The Story of More: How We Got to Climate Change and Where to Go from Here](#)

Jahren, Hope

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.

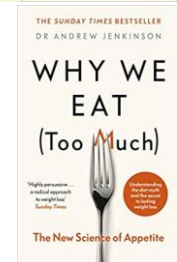


[Why We Eat \(Too Much\)](#)

Jenkinson, Andrew

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.

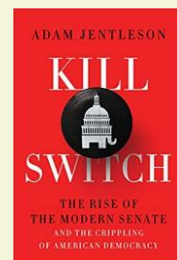



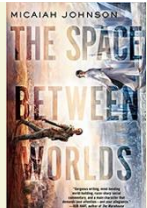
[Kill Switch: The Rise of the Modern Senate and the Crippling of American Democracy](#)

Jentleson, Adam

[5/14/21](#)

Obstruction. Until I read Adam Jentleson's book titled, [Kill Switch: The Rise of the Modern Senate and the Crippling of American Democracy](#), I thought I understood the filibuster tradition in the United States Senate. Thanks to this interesting book, I understand better the intentions of the founders in the structure of Congress and how the current use of the filibuster distorts the ways in which the minority is heard and then majority rules. The current



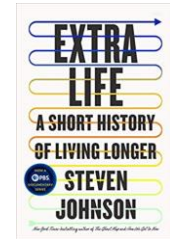
				<p>state of obstruction means that we have, in effect, minority rule, a state of affairs anticipated by the founders who put in place a way for the minority views to be heard for a period of debate, then voting to represent the will of the majority. Readers interested in public policy are those most likely to enjoy this book. I learned more about the tradition of the filibuster and the ways in which obstruction has led to gridlock and thwarting the will of the majority of Americans.</p>	
<u>Lorna Mott Comes Home</u>	Johnson, Diane	*****	11/16/21	<p>Manners. Octogenarian novelist Diane Johnson still has a thing or two to observe and to say about how some of us live today. In another era, her novel titled, <u>Lorna Mott Comes Home</u>, might be considered a comedy of manners, so perhaps that may be the best summary of this novel. Protagonist Lorna Mott Dumas has left her second husband in France where she's lived for two decades and returns home to San Francisco. She finds a place far different from the one she left, and her extended family are facing concurrent challenges of coping with the ups and downs of contemporary life. Fascinating characters and fine writing make this diversion a delight to read.</p>	
<u>The Space Between Worlds</u>	Johnson, Micaiah	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	

Extra Life: A Short History of Living Longer

Johnson, Steven

11/22/21

Lessons. How does change happen in society? In his book titled, Extra Life: A Short History of Living Longer, Steven Johnson explores the reasons for the doubling of life expectancy over the past century. There are lessons from his analysis to apply in our society today, especially since there are changes to life expectancy because of responses to the coronavirus pandemic. Many factors have led to the increase in life expectancy and curious readers may know some of them, but few will be able to list all the ones that Johnson describes in this interesting book.



Mirrorland

Johnstone, Carole

5/27/21

Twins. The shadows and hidden spaces in the present and the past keep readers somewhat in the dark as Carole Johnstone unveils a psychological thriller story in her debut novel titled, Mirrorland. As I read this book, I kept thinking of 1 Corinthians 13:12: "For now we see through a glass, darkly..." (King James Version). Protagonist Cat returns to Edinburgh from Los Angeles after a dozen year estrangement from her twin sister, El, who has disappeared. El and her husband, Ross, purchased the old gothic family home in which Cat and El had created an imaginary world they called Mirrorland, a place with secrets and shadows. As readers follow Cat inside the family home trying to follow clues left by El, we become enlightened about events in the past and the present. Johnstone's fine writing keeps the plot intricate and precise, as we twist in the dark and the light searching for answers.

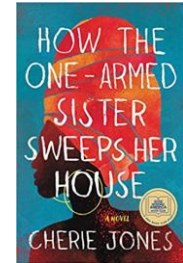


How the One-Armed Sister Sweeps Her House

Jones, Cherie

3/18/21

Ache. The beauty and affluence of Baxter Beach in Barbados overshadows the ache and sorrow of the poor who struggle to survive there. In her novel titled, How the One-Armed Sister Sweeps Her House, Cherie Jones draws us quickly into grievous loss, inflicted pain and ongoing abuse. We ache for these characters in their pain, as we live with them on the beach. There's an intensity to this novel that never lets up. These tragic heroes will remain in your mind long after you finish reading the novel.



The Prophets

Jones, Jr., Robert

5/6/21

Representation. Thanks to the finely written novel by Robert Jones, Jr., titled, The Prophets, young gay Black men can see themselves represented as enslaved people on a Southern plantation. Jones offers two memorable protagonists, Isaiah and Samuel. He describes the intimacy of their relationship and how even that precious thing is subject to the whims and oppression of slave masters. What Jones does so well in this novel is lay out the story of love in a context of evil and hate, and how the human spirit thrives in love. He describes pain and suffering, while conveying what's beautiful, where truth lies, and the hope that becomes real in love.

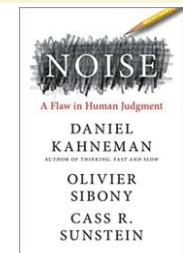


Noise: A Flaw in Human Judgment

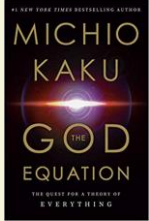
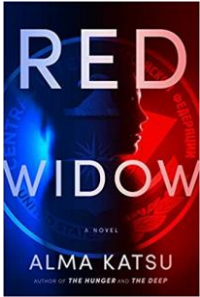
Kahneman, Daniel,
Oliver Sibony and
Cass R. Sunstein


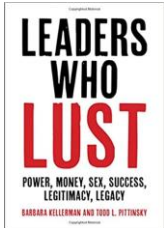

7/22/21


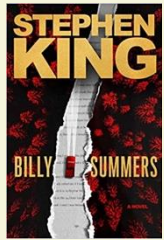
Magnitude. There's one big takeaway from this book titled, Noise: A Flaw in Human Judgment, by Daniel Kahneman, Oliver Sibony and Cass R. Sunstein: there's a lot more variability in judgments than you think there is. The authors elaborate in multiple fields how much we are unaware



of the extreme variability in those judgments that should be identical. They explain why we are susceptible to noise in making judgments, and what steps individuals and organizations can take to reduce that noise.

<p><u>The God Equation: The Quest for a Theory of Everything</u></p>	<p>Kaku, Michio</p>	<p>****</p>	<p><u>6/8/21</u></p> <p>String. If like me, your science reading has been erratic, and you wonder if your knowledge has fallen out of date, you can get a quick and readable catchup with the world of physics in Michio Kaku's book titled, <u>The God Equation: The Quest for a Theory of Everything</u>. Like a university teacher to a class of non-majors, Kaku explains complex things in simple ways, and his focus on string theory may actually make sense to most readers. Kaku shares with great joy the beauty and symmetry of physics with readers, and how the great questions are worth asking.</p>	
<p><u>Red Widow</u></p>	<p>Katsu, Alma</p>	<p>****</p>	<p><u>5/27/21</u></p> <p>Mole. Readers who enjoy spy fiction are likely to enjoy Alma Katsu's novel titled, <u>Red Widow</u>. Protagonist Lyndsey Duncan has been called home to CIA headquarters on administrative leave following an indiscretion that has put her career at risk. After three Russian assets were exposed, the CIA suspects a mole at either Moscow Station or headquarters. Lyndsey has been asked to investigate. Katsu's plot is engaging, and the characters are complex and interesting.</p>	

<u>The Last Exit</u>	Kaufman, Michael	****	<u>8/19/21</u>	<p>Eden. In the near future presented in Michael Kaufman's novel titled, <u>The Last Exit</u>, the superrich have secured their future by taking a longevity drug, while an epidemic of encephalitis hastens premature death for average people. Parents who choose euthanasia before they turn 65 can make their children eligible for the miracle drug to ensure longevity for them. Protagonist Jen Lu works on the elder abuse unit of the D.C. police department, and her investigations lead her toward a secret drug called Eden which seems to be causing premature aging and death. The characters in this novel are well drawn, the plot twists entertaining, and the subject fascinating. Most of all, Jen Lu is a compelling individual who's likely to appear in future Kaufman novels.</p>	
<u>Leaders Who Lust: Power, Money, Sex, Success, Legitimacy, Legacy</u>	Kellerman, Barbara and Todd Pittinsky	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
<u>Things in Jars</u>	Kidd, Jess	****	<u>3/18/21</u>	<p>Collectors. The more quirky Jess Kidd's novel titled, <u>Things in Jars</u>, became, the more I surrendered to her finely written prose. She gives readers a Victorian detective mystery packed with a cast of fascinating, unusual and sometimes otherworldly characters. We see that wealthy individuals would collect specimens of all sorts of unusual things and behave in ways that disturb modern readers. There are curiosities and</p>	

				<p>spectacles that define the time period, and a female detective whose skills are put to the test in this intriguing case.</p> <p>Bran. Mary Russell and her husband, Sherlock Holmes, head to the Carpathian Mountains in Laurie R. King's novel titled, <u>Castle Shade</u>. After the granddaughter of Queen Victoria, Queen Marie of Romania, calls for help, Russell and Holmes head to the castle of Bran which Marie has received as a gift from the people. Perched in the mountains on the border of Romania and Transylvania, the setting is described by King with vivid prose, and the mystery will bring joy to fans of this series and the genre.</p>	
<u>Castle Shade</u>	King, Laurie R.	****	<u>7/17/21</u>		
<u>Billy Summers</u>	King, Stephen	*****	<u>9/23/21</u>	<p>Redemption. Stephen King respects readers enough to allow us to read his work on as many levels as we choose. For those looking to read a gripping story, the novel titled, <u>Billy Summers</u>, delivers an engaging and entertaining story. For those who enjoy complex characters who grapple with issues of right and wrong, protagonist Billy Summers reveals our own human behavior with clarity: most of us try to do the right thing; we sometimes do things we know are wrong; and we try to find ways to do things we know are wrong for what we consider the right reasons. Billy is a talented sniper, and he accepts assignments to shoot people who have done bad things. The novel presents what he considers his last job. In the course of this novel, he finds himself able to pursue a journey toward redemption, and by the time we reach that part of the story, we are</p>	

				cheering for Billy no matter what he does. King knows how to get our attention, how to keep it, and how to throw a curve that surprises and satisfies. I loved every minute spent with Billy Summers.	
<u>Later</u>	King, Stephen	****	<u>4/22/21</u>	<p>Evil. Leave it to Stephen King to give us a novel titled, <u>Later</u>, about facing up to evil during our current turbulent times. Protagonist Jamie Conklin has the ability to see the recently dead. He learns that when questioned, they must tell the truth. We all wrestle with evil in one form or another, but most readers will feel goosebumps when we read about Jamie's battle with evil. Isn't that exactly what we want from a Stephen King novel? Of course, we also end up thinking about good and evil, and there's never any harm in that, is there?</p>	
<u>How to Fly</u>	Kingsolver, Barbara	****	<u>2/4/21</u>	<p>Transported. I love the way poetry can call attention to something simple in nature, provide a vivid image through words, then send our minds off on an adventure to some other place. In her collection titled, <u>How to Fly</u>, Barbara Kingsolver offers a wide range of poems that provide transport from our home base of reality to new places. With eyes wide open to the wonders of the natural world, Kingsolver uses carefully chosen words to merge what she sees and feels with what a reader can find when we join her on a journey toward insight and understanding and awe.</p>	

Intimacies

Kitamura, Katie

8/19/21

Interpreting. Over the course of 240 pages in her novel titled, Intimacies, Katie Kitamura presents an unnamed everywoman as she struggles to interpret meaning for her life while she interprets language in her translating job at The Hague. The need to interpret in both her work life and personal life add to the daily burdens of this fascinating character who also grieves the recent death of her father. We watch as the interpreter narrows her focus and misses much of what is important around her. At the same time, we find that turning away from larger troubles can open a capacity for intimacy. As we read this book, we're likely to shut out other distractions and feel an intimacy of our own with this finely written novel as we try to figure out what is going on in our world and how we find our place there.

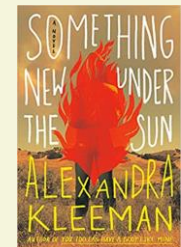


Something New Under the Sun

Kleeman, Alexandra

12/18/21

Drought. I'm a bit embarrassed to admit that I laughed a lot while reading Alexandra Kleeman's dystopian climate change novel titled, Something New Under the Sun. She makes a catastrophic drought humorous. Writer Patrick Hamlin leaves his wife, daughter, and the east coast for California where his novel is being made into a film. His self-absorption provides a reliable motif throughout the novel. Cassidy Carter is a Hollywood starlet cast for the film, so why would she not be self-obsessed? Tinseltown satire is always funny, especially when done as well as Kleeman does here. Along with the characters, readers adapt to the looming menace of fires and the water shortage. We don't



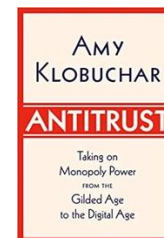
				think twice as some characters shift to drinking WAT-R, a commercial substitute for the water that is no longer available. Kleeman plays with absurdity in this novel, and her sentences are so finely crafted that their beauty can distract readers from the overall story and I found that to be a refreshing pleasure.	
--	--	--	--	--	--

[Antitrust: Taking on Monopoly Power from the Gilded Age to the Digital Age](#)

Klobuchar, Amy

[7/10/21](#)

Competition. Here's a free and important takeaway from Amy Klobuchar's book titled, [Antitrust: Taking on Monopoly Power from the Gilded Age to the Digital Age](#), she makes the point that this subject is more pro-competition than antitrust. The trusts were entities one hundred years ago. Today's challenge is that competition is stifled by large entities that wield too much power and influence. In the book she reviews the past and present and offers concrete ways to move toward a better future. I read this book shortly after Josh Hawley's [The Tyranny of Big Tech](#), and continue to think that these two politicians and others should find common ground to take action.

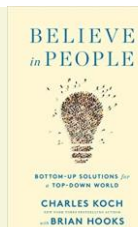


[Believe in People: Bottom-Up Solutions for a Top-Down World](#)

Koch, Charles

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.



[The Biggest Bluff: How I Learned to Pay Attention, Master Myself, and Win](#)

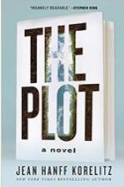
Konnikova, Maria

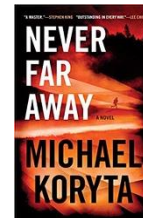
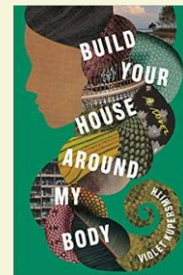
[2/23/21](#)

Writing. I couldn't care less about poker. If that was what Maria Konnikova's book titled, [The Biggest Bluff: How I Learned to Pay Attention, Master Myself, and Win](#), was all about, I would have skipped

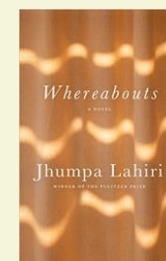
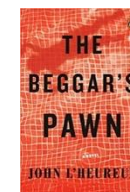


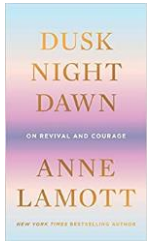
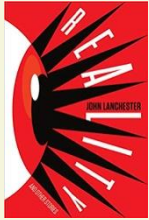
reading it. Instead, I found a well-written exploration about how we learn new skills and how we can control aspects of our behavior through focused attention and repetition of what we want to do better. Konnikova's personal story in this book is captivating, her insights valuable, and her writing superb. If you like poker, all the better.

<p><u>The Plot</u></p>	<p>Korelitz, Jean Hanff</p>	<p>*****</p>	<p>6/19/21</p> <p>Crib. Good fiction can lead readers to reflect about human nature and help us appreciate the complexity of people just like us. In her novel titled, <u>The Plot</u>, Jean Hanff Korelitz presents protagonist Jacob Finch Bonner, a young writer whose career trajectory has plunged after showing initial promise. While teaching creative writing in a bottom tier program, a student tells Jacob the plot of a planned novel that Jacob sees could be a real unicorn: an untrod story that would sell plenty of books. After he learns of the student's death, Jacob decides to crib the student's plot idea and use it for a novel of his own. Korelitz satirizes the publishing business with skill, and captures the anxiety faced by many writers who try to get their works published. Fans of literary fiction and observers of the publishing world are likely to enjoy that part of the novel. The intricate construction of this novel will also thrill those readers who appreciate such things. She also presents a thriller, and fans of those novels will likely find her efforts too predictable to be satisfying, but nonetheless a page turner. I, for one, was ready for several different final twists at</p>	
------------------------	-----------------------------	--------------	--	--

				<p>the end of the novel, and closed the book wishing she pursued at least one of them. Fans of psychological fiction will reflect on several characters and how they responded to the challenges of their lives. There's a great story at the core of this novel, and that is likely to sell a lot of books to be appreciated by different types of readers.</p>	
<u>Never Far Away</u>	Koryta, Michael	****	<u>4/27/21</u>	<p>Released. Fans of thrillers want to feel our hearts beating faster as we become engaged in the action of a story. In his novel titled, <u>Never Far Away</u>, Michael Koryta opens with thrilling action, relaxes the tension for a bit, and then tightly winds a coil until the tension demands to be released. A mother made what she thought was the best decision for her children. Her plan falls apart, and she and her children face mortal peril. There's a battle between worthy adversaries at the climax of the novel, and by the time the tense coil is released, our hearts have been beating at an elevated rate for a long time. This is a well-told thriller that's packed with action.</p>	
<u>Build Your House Around My Body</u>	Kupersmith, Violet	****	<u>8/26/21</u>	<p>Disappearance. The disappearance of 22-year-old protagonist Winnie provides the main structure of Violet Kupersmith's debut novel titled, <u>Build Your House Around My Body</u>. Winnie left the United States in 2010 to teach English in Vietnam and reconnect with that part of her heritage. Like the snakes that play prominent roles in this novel, Winnie wants to shed her current mixed-ethnic skin and become truly herself. Kupersmith's prose is finely written and will please those readers who love literary</p>	

			<p>fiction. The supernatural elements of the novel will appeal to those readers who enjoy a certain creepiness and otherworldly components in fiction. The story will likely appeal to any reader who loves folklore and appreciates a well-told tale. I was delighted by the skill with which Kupersmith tied all the pieces together.</p>	
The Beggar's Pawn	L'Heureux, John	*****	11/16/21	<p>Trust. The issues explored in John L'Heureux' posthumous novel titled, The Beggar's Pawn, made me think the author possessed a vivid awareness of his own mortality. We find an affluent couple, David and Maggie Holliss, easing into retirement, and navigating the rough terrain of complicated relationships with their three adult children. After they extend trust to a stranger in the form of a small loan, that person seems to become the center of their lives in ways that are frustrating and tragic, allowing L'Heureux to explore the terrain of charity and justice. The strains of a health scare bring all the underlying issues to bear and reveal brittle and fragile bonds even where we believe love is strong. Fans of fine writing are those readers most likely to enjoy this novel.</p>
Whereabouts	Lahiri, Jhumpa	****	6/24/21	<p>Lost. Through her prose in a novel titled, Whereabouts, Jhumpa Lahiri found a way for me to feel the vertigo faced by her protagonist. This unnamed narrator has lost her bearings, and we join her disequilibrium as she wanders in search of what she has lost. The mood Lahiri creates joins readers to the loneliness of the narrator, and every fragment adds to our</p>



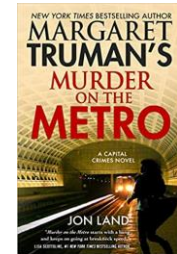
				<p>hope that she will find her way. Before long, we find ourselves becoming observant with the narrator and rooted as ourselves in a time and in a place. Fans of literary fiction are those readers most likely to enjoy this finely crafted novel.</p> <p>Humanity. More than enough can pull us down on the average day, so it can be refreshing to read something uplifting. In her book titled, <u>Dusk, Night, Dawn: On Revival and Courage</u>, Anne Lamott converses with readers using stories and wit to reveal our common human foibles and the ways in which we meander through life. Her self-deprecating humor can soften us for seeing the places in our own lives where we become self-absorbed and overlook daily gifts of bliss.</p>	
<u>Dusk, Night, Dawn: On Revival and Courage</u>	Lamott, Anne	****	<u>3/25/21</u>		
<u>Reality and Other Stories</u>	Lanchester, John	****	<u>8/5/21</u>	<p>Truth. The eight stories in the collection by John Lanchester titled, <u>Reality and Other Stories</u>, capture the mood of our time when truth and reality can seem flexible. We're often disconnected from life each day and distracted by the alerts on our devices more than being present in time and place. Lanchester explores the uneasiness we feel as we navigate with our devices and still experience stuff in real life. There's fun at play in this examination of some dark parts of contemporary life. Most readers will find something to like in each of these stories.</p>	

Margaret Truman's
Murder on the
Metro

Land, Jon

7/17/21

Scheme. Jon Land has written his first Capital Crimes novel in a series created by the late Margaret Truman. The exciting novel titled, Margaret Truman's Murder on the Metro, uncovers a scheme at the highest levels of power that will demand the greatest suspension of disbelief by readers. Protagonist Robert Brixton, a private investigator, was on a Washington Metro train when his alertness led him to thwart a terrorist attack. Before long he teams up with an unlikely partner and together, they prevent a much larger plot from being enacted. Fans of crime thrillers will find a lot to enjoy in this novel, provided you can get beyond the incredulity of the plot itself.

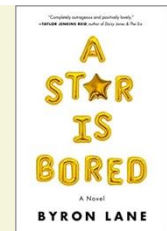


A Star Is Bored

Lane, Byron

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.

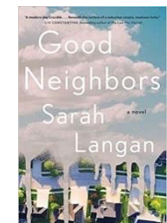


Good Neighbors

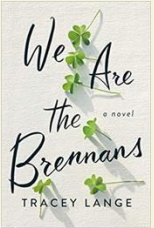
Langan, Sara


5/6/21

Sinkhole. Toxic muck runs beneath bucolic Maple Street in a suburban Long Island town. In her novel titled, Good Neighbors, Sara Langan takes us beyond appearances and into a dark reality of life in many neighborhoods, especially when some people don't fit in. The Maple Street enclave felt their first level of discomfort after the Wilde family moved in from the city. They don't look right, they don't act right, and they are just not the right people for Maple Street. After a sinkhole opens in a park near Maple Street, a young girl falls



in. As the search to find her progresses, the Wildes become the focus of accusations. If, like me, seclusion during the spread of COVID-19 made you look at neighbors a little differently, say as potential vectors of disease, a novel like this one will lead you to all the bad places that such sentiments can encourage visiting. We don't want to be like the neighbors on Maple Street, but there are times when we will act just like them. That's a sinkhole to be avoided.

<u>We Are the Brennans</u>	Lange, Tracey	*****	<u>12/13/21</u>	<p>Family. Sure if it weren't for the secrets held close to the heart in Irish families, there'd be nothing left to hold us together. In her debut novel titled, <u>We Are the Brennans</u>, Tracey Lange explores the ways in which tightly knit families can be wounded, and what it takes for all members of the family to heal. Readers who love interesting stories packed with family drama are those most likely to enjoy this novel.</p>	
--	---------------	-------	---------------------------------	---	---

<u>No One Goes Alone</u>	Larson, Erik	*****	<u>10/25/21</u>	<p>Ghosts. It's never too late to enjoy a Halloween treat in the form of a ghost story. In a rare departure from non-fiction, Erik Larson offers a fictional audiobook titled, <u>No One Goes Alone</u>, that tells a ghost story about a group investigating mysterious disappearance on a North Atlantic island in 1905. Rational explanations are hard to come by after the investigators become stranded on the island, and face peril on many fronts. Meant to be heard, the story draws readers into the setting gradually, and by the time tension builds, we are as scared as many of the characters.</p>	
--	--------------	-------	---------------------------------	--	---

Shelter in Place

Leavitt, David

2/4/21

Aggrieved. Even the three dogs (Bedlington terriers) in David Leavitt's novel titled, Shelter in Place, come across as entitled elites. Leavitt skewers with great skill the complete cast of characters in this novel, mostly through his fine deployment of dialogue to highlight the aggrieved state as felt by those who are so much better off than most. Residents of wealthy enclaves in Manhattan know these characters and possibly are these people. If after reading a sample of this novel and not finding the pointed wit, you may need to do some additional introspection. The world and the characters in the novel revolve around the star of protagonist Eva. Worried about life in the United States under President Trump, Eva buys an apartment in Venice as a potential refuge. I thoroughly enjoyed spending time with this cast of very unlikeable characters, thanks to Leavitt's fine writing and pointed humor.

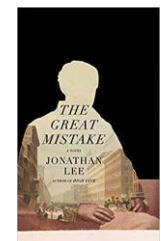


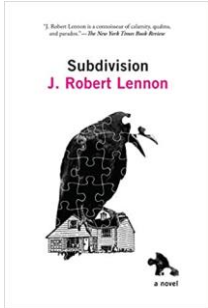
The Great Mistake

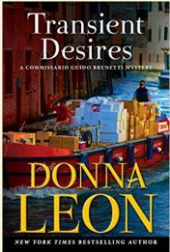
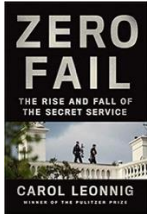
Lee, Jonathan

12/18/21

Green. As a proud son of Brooklyn, I confess that I had never heard of Andrew Haswell Green, the man responsible for the consolidation of Manhattan and Brooklyn, until I read Jonathan Lee's engaging novel titled, The Great Mistake. Fans of historical fiction can escape our current era and head to New York in the nineteenth and twenty centuries. Green is a complex and fascinating character at the center of great transformations for New York City. The scenes in this novel are vivid, the story entertaining and



<u>Temporary</u>	Leichter, Hilary	****	4/27/21	<p>enlightening, and the characters memorable.</p> <p>Satire. In her debut novel titled, <u>Temporary</u>, Hilary Leichter leads readers toward laughing at the ephemeral reality of life and work. This is a satire about capitalism that will delight those readers who see the futility of tying one's identity to their work. Welcome to a finely written swipe at the gig economy and the precarious nature of contemporary work. Leichter's language will delight those whose eyes roll when faced with corporate-speak. If you can take any break at all from your work, consider reading this novel and then reflect on what's most important in your life.</p>	
<u>Subdivision</u>	Lennon, J. Robert	****	10/25/21	<p>Puzzle. Readers comfortable with the surreal will love J. Robert Lennon's novel titled, <u>Subdivision</u>. We feel the excitement and confusion of an unnamed narrator who doesn't know how she wound up in a guest house in a place called Subdivision. There is a task for both the narrator and us to solve a puzzle, as the book cover illustrates. Nothing seems familiar, though, and some things are downright absurd. Readers will find the book easy to lead to laughter and interesting to explore the changing environment. Isn't all of life a puzzle that keeps us trying to figure stuff out? Lennon guides us in this novel to solve our own puzzles.</p>	

<u>Transient Desires</u>	Leon, Donna	****	<u>4/13/21</u>	<p>Waters. The thirtieth crime novel by Donna Leon set in Venice featuring Commissario Guido Brunetti is titled, <u>Transient Desires</u>. The introspective Brunetti reflects his own prejudices as he becomes involved in uncovering serious criminal acts outside his jurisdiction. A larger than usual part of the plot involves the waters around Venice and requires Brunetti to trust colleagues he's never met based on a web of connections that encourage treating strangers well because of who vouches for them. The characters in this novel are drawn with complexity and deep insight into human behavior. Fans of crime fiction with strong protagonists are those readers most likely to enjoy this novel and this series.</p>	
<u>Zero Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Secret Service</u>	Leonnig, Carol	****	<u>8/26/21</u>	<p>Mismanagement. I found myself angry after reading Carol Leonnig's informative book titled, <u>Zero Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Secret Service</u>. While mistakes in protection often led to improvements in procedure, a toxic culture meant repeated mismanagement by successive leaders. Those trying to harm public figures can fail multiple times, but civil servants in roles of protection must get it right every minute of every day. The record of the United States Secret Service as reported in this book reflects an organization in grievous need of repair. Leonnig chronicles the whole situation with great skill.</p>	

[I Alone Can Fix It: Donald J. Trump's Catastrophic Final Year](#)

Leonnig, Carol D. and Philip Rucker

[8/26/21](#)

Sources. *Washington Post* journalists Carol D. Leonnig and Philip Rucker have written a follow up to their book titled, [A Very Stable Genius](#), that recounted the first three years of the Trump Presidency. They deliver their accounting of Trump's final year in their book titled, [I Alone Can Fix It: Donald J. Trump's Catastrophic Final Year](#). The subtitle summarizes their assessment with a single adjective. The book includes their own reporting from that final year, and with some brief distance from their daily reporting at the time, they place events in more context for this volume and offer a long and readable narrative about that last year. I marveled at the extent of their sources, their clear access to those people who were present for what was done behind closed doors. Unlike for their earlier book, this time President Trump agreed to an interview, and he spent hours with the reporters, which they describe in detail for readers. Readers interested in public affairs are those most likely to enjoy this account of very recent history.

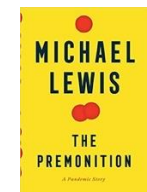


[The Premonition: A Pandemic Story](#)

Lewis, Michael


[8/26/21](#)

Determination. Most readers will cheer the people that Michael Lewis presents in his book titled, [The Premonition: A Pandemic Story](#). Through sheer determination and twisting in and around bureaucracy, we learn about the important part played by different people in mitigating risk during the pandemic. We meet people with expertise and passion for their work, and we learn about the importance of a high school science fair




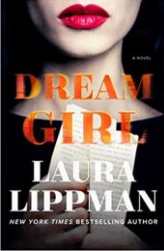
project on public policy recommendations for the United States. Through the fine writing to which fans have become accustomed, Michael Lewis digs into something and finds fascinating people and follows a subject where those people lead him. The result is a book structured around people most readers never heard of, but whose determination and talent saved countless lives during a significant crisis. I'm still cheering them.

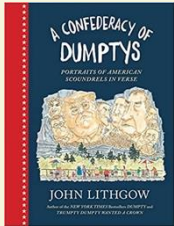
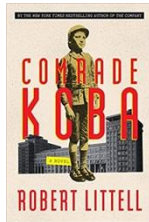
<u>The Thousand Crimes of Ming Tsu</u>	Lin, Tom	*****	<u>9/23/21</u>	<p>Blind. Tom Lin's debut novel titled, <u>The Thousand Crimes of Ming Tsu</u>, is like no American Western you've ever read. The novel is set alongside the tracks of the Central Pacific Railroad during its construction, and protagonist Ming Tsu has embarked on a journey to settle scores. Lin draws a landscape we thought we knew with descriptive and vivid language that makes it seem new and fresh. We learn how Ming has been wronged and watch him as he is led by a blind prophet through the desolate West. I found myself becoming hungry and thirsty as Ming runs short of food and water. I felt satisfied when Ming carried out frontier justice. I marveled about how Lin helped me see revenge as a path toward love, the driving force behind Ming's journey.</p>	
--	----------	-------	--------------------------------	--	---

<u>Some Go Home</u>	Lindsay, Odie	*****	<u>7/22/21</u>	<p>Tensions. In Odie Lindsay's debut novel titled, <u>Some Go Home</u>, individual people and particular places stand in for the tension in many families and communities over the past sixty years. The fictional town of Pitchlynn, Mississippi could be any hometown. The tension of race and class</p>	
-------------------------------------	---------------	-------	--------------------------------	---	---

can be focused at antebellum Wallis House, now with new owners in contemporary and gentrifying Pitchlynn, but with vivid echoes of a murder there in 1964. Lindsay gives us race, class, memory and a cold hard look at reality. The prose is finely written, the characters complex, and the narrative flows in irregular ways that seep us into a story that we can come to see from many perspectives and time periods.

<u>Rachel to the Rescue</u>	Lipman, Elinor	****	<u>8/5/21</u>	<p>Wit. Here's a tip to enjoy reading Elinor Lipman's witty novel titled, <u>Rachel to the Rescue</u>: put Trump in the background and let protagonist Rachel plow ahead with her own antics. That approach led me to relax and laugh as Rachel works in the White House office of records management taping back together papers that the president had ripped up. I laughed at the consequential reply all e-mail that has happened to many office workers. As Rachel experiences growing up while older adults remain juvenile readers will enjoy the humor of the novel and likely feel affection for Rachel, who is the star of this funny novel.</p> 
---	----------------	------	-------------------------------	---

<u>Dream Girl</u>	Lippman, Laura	****	<u>7/17/21</u>	<p>Twists. Readers who enjoy suspense novels are those most likely to enjoy Laura Lippman's novel titled, <u>Dream Girl</u>. Protagonist Gerry Andersen moved from New York to Baltimore to care for his elderly mother. Ensconced in the penthouse of a new highrise, Gerry's mother died, and Gerry has suffered an injury from a fall and now requires help from an assistant during the day and from</p> 
-----------------------------------	----------------	------	--------------------------------	---

<p><u>A Confederacy of Dumptys: Portraits of American Scoundrels in Verse</u></p>	<p>Lithgow, John</p>	<p>*****</p>	<p>10/25/21</p> <p>Rogues. John Lithgow completes his trilogy of satire in verse featuring Donald Trump with a book titled, <u>A Confederacy of Dumptys: Portraits of American Scoundrels in Verse</u>. In addition to the final chaotic days of the Trump presidency, Lithgow presents a rogue's gallery of other men and women from American history to illustrate where Trump fits into our tradition. When I finished this final offering, I was reminded again of how FDR put artists to work during the depression. That kept creative types like Lithgow too busy to roast the president. While I knew most of the rogues in this collection, I got to meet some for the first time. Readers who have an appetite for satire are those most likely to enjoy this book.</p>	
<p><u>Comrade Koba</u></p>	<p>Littell, Robert</p>	<p>*****</p>	<p>2/4/21</p> <p>Loneliness. The precocious and naïve protagonist of Robert Littell's novel titled, <u>Comrade Koba</u>, is a ten-and-a-half-year-old boy named Leon Rozental who lives in an apartment building called the House on the Embankment, near the Kremlin. After Leon watches from a hidden room as the secret police arrest his mother, he and some friends find ways to survive on their own as they navigate secret passageways and find money to eat in the building's</p>	

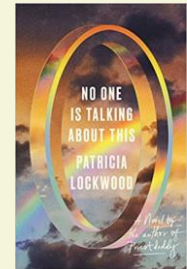
cafeteria. While on his own, Leon stumbles into a passageway to a large apartment where armed guards are protecting an elderly man. The lonely old man summons Leon into the apartment where the two spend much time in conversation over several weeks. Leon believes the man to be a high ranking official, but he doesn't realize that he is speaking with Stalin. Thanks to Littell's wisdom and insight, we see the elderly Stalin reflecting in loneliness about his life and finding a nonjudgmental and receptive audience in young Leon. We find Leon to be a prodigy beyond his years, finding a way to get what he wants from the old man. At times funny and always poignant, I loved this thoughtful character study set at the time of Stalin's death.

No One Is Talking About This

Lockwood, Patricia

3/18/21

Inventive. Patricia Lockwood brings our connected lives to a whole other level in her novel titled, No One Is Talking About This. Readers receive fragments, snippets, details, images, just like we do online as we navigate our days online. We can laugh at some, scratch our head at others, and just wait and see for the rest. Suddenly, something really important intervenes, and by then Lockwood has us running ahead with her to encounter a baby, to learn about Proteus Syndrome and find the places in the endless daily scroll that offer kindness, love, understanding and support. This inventive novel speaks directly to our time and place and shouts with clarity to pay attention to what matters.



Extraterrestrial:
The First Sign of
Intelligent Life
Beyond Earth

Loeb, Avi

4/13/21

Astrophysics. Every time I read a good science book, I think fondly of those college friends who, unlike me, majored in physics and were compelled to take the mandatory 8am Saturday class with the head of the department. While I slept in until closer to lunch, these friends were learning laws of physics that have since been disproven, while I continue to enjoy a good night's sleep. With that fondness, I was enraptured when I read Avi Loeb's book titled, Extraterrestrial: The First Sign of Intelligent Life Beyond Earth. Holy cow! Somehow I did not pay attention to what happened in 2017 when scientists observed an anomaly passing through our solar system that points toward its origin in a distant alien civilization. Was this not a page one story? Did I miss the PBS Newshour story? In case you missed this story as well, Loeb's book offers critical thinking that supports the view that what was observed has implications and consequences that requires more thought and study. Nerd out.



Ruthie Fear

Loskutoff, Maxim

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.



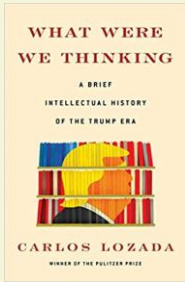
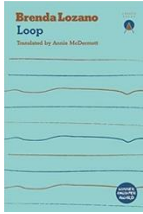
The Finisher


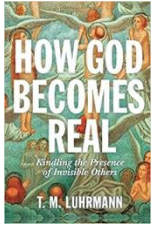
Lovesey, Peter

12/18/21

Race. The backdrop for the nineteenth novel to feature Bath detective Peter Diamond, a book titled, The Finisher, is a half marathon race. What Diamond sees among the finishers of the race puts him on full alert. What follows is an



<p><u>What Were We Thinking: A Brief Intellectual History of the Trump Era</u></p>	<p>Lozado, Carlos</p>	<p>****</p>	<p>entertaining crime novel, in which Lovesey offers twists on multiple finishers as the story unfolds. Fans of this series are those readers most likely to appreciate the return to a familiar character and setting.</p> <p>Survey. I thought I read a lot of books about the rise of Donald Trump, the factors that led to his election, and his presidency. <i>Washington Post</i> book critic Carlos Lozado beat me by a mile with the 150 or so books that he consumed on this subject. In his engaging book titled, <u>What Were We Thinking: A Brief Intellectual History of the Trump Era</u>, Lozado assembles what he read into themes and offers a survey of the books relating to those themes. While there have been many books on this subject, much of the history of this time will take time to be written. In the meantime, those readers interested in public policy will find this survey interesting to read while time passes, should any appetite for this subject remain.</p>	
<p><u>Loop</u></p>	<p>Lozano, Brenda</p>	<p>***</p>	<p>Notebook. Fans of innovative or experimental fiction are those readers most likely to enjoy Brenda Lozano's novel titled, <u>Loop</u>. Structured as a woman's diary or notebook, we find the narrator riffing from one thought to another. We learn that her boyfriend has left Mexico for Spain and she feels his absence acutely. We learn that she continues to recover from a serious accident. We search with her for the perfect notebook. We join her in a world of ideas. We pursue curiosities. Mostly, we</p>	

<u>Agatha of Little Neon</u>	Luchette, Claire	****	<u>9/23/21</u>	<p>wait with her for the return of her beloved and share her notes in the meantime.</p> <p>Nun. You've gotta love these nuns. Claire Luchette's entertaining debut novel titled, <u>Agatha of Little Neon</u>, draws readers into a fascinating cast of characters, including nuns. Protagonist Sister Agatha is forced to leave her comfortable convent in Lackawanna when she and fellow sisters are assigned to run a halfway house in Woonsocket. Luchette develops Sister Agatha as a complex and interesting character and injects the novel with even does of humor and insight. The prose is finely written, and the time spent with the sisters and the ensemble cast was totally enjoyable. No matter how much you love nuns as you start reading this novel, you'll love them a lot by the end.</p>	
<u>How God Becomes Real: Kindling the Presence of Invisible Others</u>	Luhrmann, T.M.	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
<u>Kraft</u>	Lüscher, Jonas	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	<div>Kraft</div> <div>Jonas Lüscher</div> <div></div>

The End of Everything

Mack, Katie

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.



Bright and Dangerous Objects

Mackintosh, Anneliese

7/10/21

Ambition. The protagonist of Annelise Mackintosh's debut novel titled, Bright and Dangerous Objects, reveals the incredible power of ambition. While she works as a deep-sea diver, Solvig has a larger ambition: she wants to be among the first people to colonize Mars. Her partner, James, wants to have a child with Solvig. Mackintosh allows the competing demands of ambition and obligation fight it out as Solvig, like many women before her, have to make life-changing choices. The prose is well-written, the characters interesting, and the revelation of human behavior insightful.



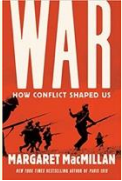
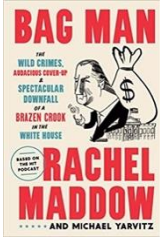
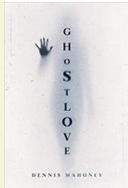
Hostage

Mackintosh, Clare

12/18/21

Manipulation. Plot twists and thrilling action propel Clare Mackintosh's psychological novel titled, Hostage. Flight attendant Mina Holbrook has volunteered to work on the inaugural flight of nonstop service from London to Sydney, a twenty-hour journey. Mina left unresolved family issues on the ground. It's what's in the air that becomes fascinating, a group of terrorists who have been manipulated by someone with a dastardly plan. Book club leaders would ask around the circle what each reader might have done in Mina's place.



<u>War: How Conflict Shaped Us</u>	MacMillan, Margaret	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
<u>Bag Man: The Wild Crimes, Audacious Cover-up, and Spectacular Downfall of a Brazen Crook in the White House</u>	Maddow, Rachel and Michael Yarvitz	*****	<u>1/16/21</u>	<p>Prosecutors. If what you remember most about the Nixon administration is Watergate, may I mention the name of the Vice President of most of those years to jog your memory? Spiro Agnew was a larger-than-life character, relatively unknown outside the State of Maryland when Nixon chose him for Vice President to shore up support from conservative Republicans (who weren't the only variety in the 1960s and 1970s). In a book titled, <u>Bag Man: The Wild Crimes, Audacious Cover-up, and Spectacular Downfall of a Brazen Crook in the White House</u>, Rachel Maddow and Michael Yarvitz lay out Agnew's crimes and what led to his resignation from office in 1973. The heroes in this story are the young prosecutors in this story who built a solid case that had nothing to do with Watergate. Attorney Elliot Richardson listened to the prosecutors, gave them room to operate and ended up negotiating terms of resignation for Agnew that put the interests of the United States first. Fans of recent history and public affairs are those most likely to enjoy this account of crime in high places.</p>	
<u>Ghostlove</u>	Mahoney, Dennis	*****	<u>7/22/21</u>	<p>Haunting. Dennis Mahoney explores the boundaries between life and afterlife in his novel titled, <u>Ghostlove</u>. Protagonist William Rook has moved into a haunted house in upstate New York and revels in</p>	

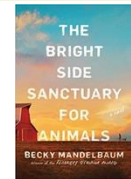
				the exciting experiences inside the house. After he falls in love with June, who has been dead for a long time, he explores a way in which he can help relieve the pain she experiences while she's trapped in a limbo state between her past life and what may be ahead.	
--	--	--	--	---	--


The Bright Side
Sanctuary for
Animals

Mandelbaum, Becky

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.



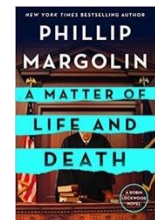
<u>Entitled: How Male Privilege Hurts Women</u>	Manne, Kate	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
---	-------------	--------	--	----------------------	---

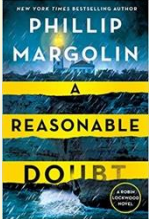

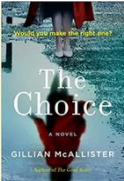
A Matter of Life
and Death

Margolin, Phillip

4/13/21

Setup. The fourth novel by Phillip Margolin to feature attorney Robin Lockwood is titled, A Matter of Life and Death. Robin reluctantly accepts becoming the defense attorney for a homeless man who has been setup to take the fall for the murder of a judge's wife. DNA evidence makes a strong case for her client's guilt, and Robin pursues the hardest path toward release of her client: discovering how her client was framed and identifying the true murderer. Fans of crime fiction are those most likely to enjoy the details of capital crime litigation.



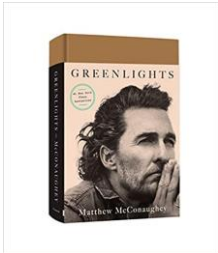
<u>A Reasonable Doubt</u>	Margolin, Phillip	****	<u>2/23/21</u>	<p>Magician. The third novel by Phillip Margolin featuring attorney Robin Lockwood is titled, <u>A Reasonable Doubt</u>. A magician with a checkered past named Robert Chesterfield requests help from Robin's firm which she reluctantly provides mostly because her retired partner had defended Chesterfield in two cases decades earlier. Fans of crime fiction will find a strong protagonist, interesting cases, and some satisfying twists.</p>	
<u>How Beautiful We Were</u>	Mbue, Imbolo	*****	<u>5/6/21</u>	<p>Village. In her novel titled, <u>How Beautiful We Were</u>, Imbolo Mbue places readers in Kosawa, a fictional African village where life has turned sour after an American oil company ravaged the environment. A dictator leads the country's government, and the pleas of the villagers for reparations and restoration of the land have been ignored for decades. Protagonist Thula left Kosawa for school in New York City, and her mission in life becomes justice for the people of Kosawa. Mbue's prose is finely written, the characters complex and interesting, and the setting is described with care. Readers will come to care about the village and the people who live there, and root for Thula while knowing her mission's success remains unlikely.</p>	
<u>The Choice</u>	McAllister, Gillian	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	

Greenlights

McConaughey,
Matthew

5/6/21

Learning. Having arrived at age 50, Matthew McConaughey decided to take stock of his life up to that milestone, and offers his reflections in a book titled, Greenlights. The sentiment of the book is to share what he’s learned about life. He lays out joy, sorrow, success, failure, luck and how to catch the right wave, or in his case, the green lights, instead of the yellow and red lights (which he says eventually turn green). His voice in this book has that aw shucks quality, and the tone is upbeat, offering a celebration of life. He tells great stories in this book and encourages all of us to find the way forward in life, wherever that takes us.

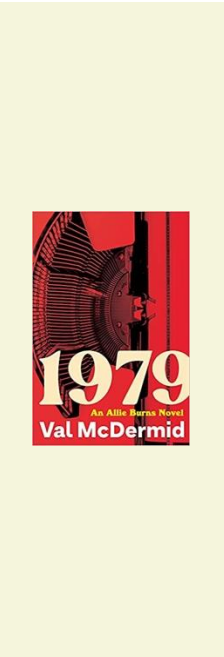


1979

McDermid, Val

11/6/21

Allie. I’m often reluctant to open the first novel in a planned series, since I know that if I like it, there will be a larger queue building of books I will want to read in the future. Once I picked up Val McDermid’s novel titled, 1979, and met protagonist and journalist Allie Burns, I knew I would read all future installments. Allie is the rare woman working for Scotland’s daily newspaper, *The Clarion*. McDermid describes life in Scotland in 1979 with great skill, and we watch Allie hold her own as she investigates stories and finds comfort at work and in life. Fans of crime fiction are those readers most likely to appreciate the character and plot development in this novel. I’m already wondering what Allie will do next.

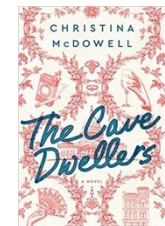


The Cave Dwellers

McDowell, Christina

8/19/21

Alienation. The title of Christina McDowell's debut novel, The Cave Dwellers, refers to a self-described appellation for Washington D.C.'s wealthiest and longest residents. While many others come and go from Washington, especially politicians, the cave dwellers remain as a form of aristocracy holding up the standards of society. McDowell grew up in that environment and suffered a great fall from the lofty place of her childhood. That experience informed her fictional approach to the alienation and changing times being faced by the cave dwellers. She explores class and race, exploitation, and privilege, and gives us a cast of characters, young and old, who are trying to navigate through a changed world. Part satire and part tragedy, McDowell draws attention to what morality means for our time. Much of the narrative is overwrought and characters are sometimes stereotypes, but anyone who has spent time living in DC or observing the upper echelons of the local society will recognize all the types that McDowell presents in this novel.

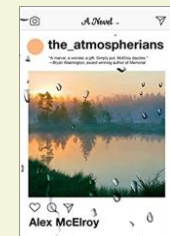




The Atmospherians

McElroy, Alex

10/25/21

Toxic. Alex McElroy's debut novel titled, The Atmospherians, takes a satirical swipe at contemporary life. Protagonist Sasha Marcus experienced rising success with her business offering wellness for women until she lost her reputation thanks to the actions of an internet troll. Sasha's oldest friend, Dyson, proposes that they work together to rehabilitate men at an abandoned summer camp in a venture



			<p>they call The Atmosphere, in essence a cult. A dozen men pay for the privilege of coming to the camp to detoxify. The world McElroy describes includes hordes of men some of whom are doing things that most readers would consider good deeds and being feared by society as a result. We find normalized eating disorders and finely written prose filled with images that will remain in your mind long after you finish reading this novel.</p>	
<p><u>The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together</u></p>	<p>McGee, Heather</p>	<p>*****</p>	<p><u>5/27/21</u></p> <p>Solidarity. If you're as sick and tired of divisiveness as I am, consider reading Heather Mc Gee's finely written book titled, <u>The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together</u>. Her premise is that when we buy into the notion that progress for some of us comes at the expense of others, we incur great losses for all of us. Not everything is a zero sum situation. There's something evil about the process of pitting some of us against others of us when practical things can be done for the benefit of all of us. It's past time to stop dividing and it's imperative that we start uniting. This book offers a message of solidarity along with practical advice on how to move ahead for the good of us all.</p>	
<p><u>Lean Fall Stand</u></p>	<p>McGregor, Jon</p>	<p>****</p>	<p><u>11/22/21</u></p> <p>Aphasia. Fans of finely written literary fiction will marvel at the way Jon McGregor finds just the right words in his novel titled, <u>Lean Fall Stand</u>, to draw readers into the life of someone suffering from aphasia. In the opening section, Lean, we find protagonist Robert Wright on an expedition in Antarctica caught in a</p>	

				<p>storm, hanging on a cliff, and suffering a stroke. His stroke has led to aphasia, and the middle section of the novel, Fall, focuses on his wife, Anna, and her role as caregiver. McGregor dissects the ways in which communication obstacles strain love and burden those in relationship. For the final section, Stand, Robert joins a support group and begins to find his voice. All along the way, McGregor's prose suits each section perfectly, and displays his considerable skill.</p>	
--	--	--	--	---	--

The Dark Remains

McIlvanney, William
and Ian Rankin

10/15/21

Completed. At the time of his death in 2015, William McIlvanney left an unfinished manuscript of a novel highlighting the first case of a Glasgow detective named Laidlaw developed in three previous novels. Prolific crime fiction author Ian Rankin completed the manuscript and presents the combined effort with McIlvanney in a novel titled, The Dark Remains. Set in the early 1970s, we find Laidlaw at the beginning of his career, acting in ways totally consistent with the character loved by readers of the other novels. The style and atmosphere seem all McIlvanney in this novel, meaning that Rankin subordinated himself out of love and homage to the late McIlvanney. Fans of crime fiction, especially the Scots variety, will find a lot to enjoy in this special novel.



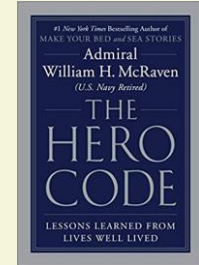
<u>A Million Aunties</u>	McKenzie, Alecia	****	<u>2/23/21</u>	<p>Kindness. We never have too many people in our lives who treat us with kindness and make us feel loved and welcome. Alecia McKenzie's novel titled, <u>A Million Aunties</u>, lets us spend time with some of those special people who provide healing and community. Art and flowers provide continuity as the story moves through New York, Jamaica, and Paris. Caring for others can be contagious, so as we follow one character who needs healing after a loss, we watch him provide support, kindness and healing to others. Extended families take many forms, and this endearing cast of characters made me wish I could spend time basking with them in the kindness they provide to each other.</p>	
<u>When the Stars Go Dark</u>	McLain, Paula	****	<u>5/6/21</u>	<p>Suspense. Novelist Paula McLain has turned to suspense for her book titled, <u>When the Stars Go Dark</u>. Protagonist Anna Hart works as a missing persons detective. Following tragedy in her personal life, she leaves San Francisco for Mendocino, where she had lived as a child with foster parents. Instead of finding refuge, she learns that a local teenager has gone missing, and Anna becomes obsessed with finding the missing girl. Thanks to McLain's expert storytelling, the backstory weaves into the suspense of the current case, and readers are rewarded with the development of Anna as a complex and interesting character.</p>	

The Hero Code:
Lessons Learned from
Lives Well Lived

McRaven, William H.

8/5/21

Virtue. Spend a little time reading retired Admiral William H. McRaven's book titled, The Hero Code: Lessons Learned from Lives Well Lived, and reflect about it for a long time. Every culture develops distinctive mores, that combination of norms and behaviors that are viewed as acceptable. When mores breakdown communities become divided. McRaven proposes in this book the behaviors practiced by those models of the best behavior in our culture, those who are called heroes. The individual heroes who helped McRaven see these lessons are all ordinary people, just like us, so there's an inspirational quality to this narrative that encourages us to emulate certain behaviors. Perhaps from his military perspective, the word "code" described these behaviors as he sees them. I consider the behaviors he describes more as virtues, and behaviors to which our better natures should always aspire.

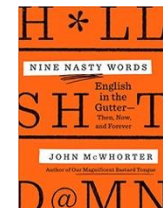


Nine Nasty Words:
English in the
Gutter: Then, Now,
and Forever

McWhorter, John

8/26/21


Linguistics. All word lovers will enjoy reading about the evolution of profane expression described by linguist John McWhorter in his book titled, Nine Nasty Words: English in the Gutter: Then, Now, and Forever. While reading this entertaining and interesting book I fondly remembered listening to the late poet John Ciardi's reflections on etymology during NPR's *Morning Edition*. Using similar expertise and good writing, McWhorter presents readers with an enjoyable book about how language changes over time, and how our choice of the right profanity



also changes when we want to make a verbal point. Before releasing your next epithet, be sure to read this book.

<u>His Only Wife</u>	Medie, Peace Adzo	****	<u>1/26/21</u>	<p>Undaunted. Readers who love strong female protagonists will enjoy meeting Afi Tekple in Peace Adzo Medie's debut novel titled, <u>His Only Wife</u>. Afi works as a seamstress in Ho, a small Ghanaian village. After her mother encourages Afi to marry a wealthy businessman named Elikem, the favored son of their landlady who is the mother's bossy employer and head of a prominent family. Medie explores the ways in which individuals scheme and manipulate different family members who fall in and out of favor for various reasons. Afi moves to Accra and quickly adjusts to finding her way in a larger world with a husband who neglects her, works hard, and has another loving relationship and a child he loves living in a home he owns and with his complete support. We cheer Afi as she stands up for herself, undaunted by the pressures coming from her family and her husband's. This is one of those engaging novels that will animate your next Zoom book club meeting.</p>	
<u>Hurricane Season</u>	Melchor, Fernanda	****	<u>5/14/21</u>	<p>Brutality. The intensity of Fernanda Melchor's prose in her novel titled, <u>Hurricane Season</u>, never seems to let up. Through long sentences and long paragraphs, multiple narrators run on and on about the depravity, violence, and brutality in the Mexican village where the novel is set. By the time we've heard from every narrator, the chronology makes</p>	

sense, and we know what life and death are like in the village, and we are ready to depart, somewhat brutalized ourselves from what we've read. Melchor's talent will make this excursion worthwhile for those readers who enjoy finely written literary fiction.

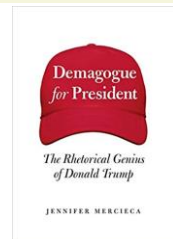
<u>The Shadow King</u>	Mengiste, Maaza	****	<u>7/17/21</u>	<p>Warriors. Maaza Mengiste's novel titled, <u>The Shadow King</u>, is set in Ethiopia during Mussolini's 1935 invasion. The novel elaborates on a lesser-known aspect of that episode: the role of women as warriors. The plans and actions of this brave women inspire the Ethiopian military as they face Mussolini's army. Mengiste's prose will appeal to readers who enjoy fine writing, and the story is likely to engage all readers who enjoy well-developed characters and historical fiction.</p>	
--	-----------------	------	--------------------------------	---	---


[Demagogue for President: The Rhetorical Genius of Donald Trump](#)

Mercieca, Jennifer

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.



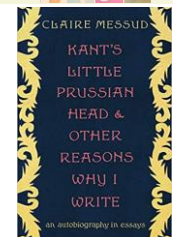
<u>22 Minutes of Unconditional Love</u>	Merkin, Daphne	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
---	----------------	--------	--	----------------------	---

[Kant's Little Prussian Head & Other Reasons Why I Write](#)

Messud, Claire

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.

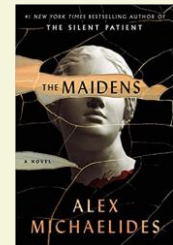


The Maidens

Michaelides, Alex

7/10/21

Unreliable. In most novels, we can count on at least one character to anchor the story, mostly because we recognize their behavior because of our own life experience. In Alex Michaelides novel titled, The Maidens, it seemed as if every character was unreliable in some form or other. We're told that protagonist Mariana Andros is a brilliant psychotherapist, but she seems clueless or incompetent in every setting that would draw upon her expertise. A Greek professor at Cambridge does things no contemporary teacher would get away with, and his dialogue was often more suited to a London pub frequented by traveling salesmen than to the heights of the academy. The young female students referenced in the title seem quite different from what we would expect of anyone attending Cambridge. Some readers will delight in the plot twists, but I found some inevitability in how the story ends and was pleased to finish the last page here and turn to something else.

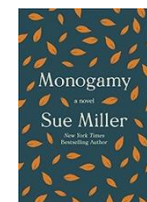


Monogamy

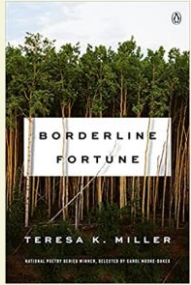
Miller, Sue

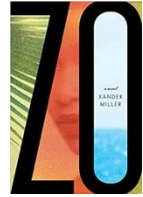
2/23/21

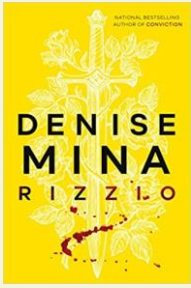
Complexity. One of the joys of reading novels involves encountering in new ways the remarkable complexity of humans whose contradictory behavior should by this time in my life come as no surprise. In her novel titled, Monogamy, Sue Miller excavates the three-decade long marriage between Graham and Annie, both of whom had been married before. Graham is an outgoing bookstore owner, and Annie an introspective photographer. Following Graham's sudden death, Annie learns things about Graham that cause her to



question how well she knew him. Miller picks away at the complexity of the characters in this novel, as we're forced to think about our own frequently contradictory behavior.

Borderline Fortune	Miller, Teresa K.	****	12/6/21	<p>Generations. I found more threads of unresolved thought as I kept reading Teresa K. Miller's poems in a collection titled, Borderline Fortune. I began to think about what we owe our parents and grandparents, and what we have inherited from them, for better and for worse. I think of the changes to places across generations and whether our course is toward healing or disaster. I think about restoring ravaged land and doing something to heal the planet. I observe extinction and grieve loss. If the stimulation of thinking is why you read poetry, be sure to explore this finely written collection.</p>	
------------------------------------	-------------------	------	-------------------------	--	---

Zo	Miller, Xander	Unread	Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
--------------------	----------------	--------	----------------------	--

Rizzio	Mina, Denise	****	11/16/21	<p>Bloody. The last place I expected to find Denise Mina's fiction is in a retelling of the bloody 1566 murder of Mary Queen of Scots' secretary, David Rizzio. In her short novel titled, Rizzio, Mina dramatizes the events leading up to the murder, and uses her skills to build suspense on every page. Readers who know the history will enjoy how Mina provides context and insight. Some readers who enjoy Mina's fiction</p>	
------------------------	--------------	------	--------------------------	--	---

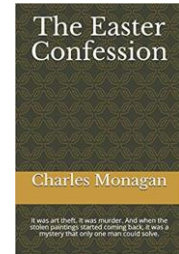
				<p>may want to learn more about history after reading this novel.</p> <p>Search. Before you commit to searching for something or someone, do you ever hesitate with second thoughts about what you might find? In her novel titled, <u>The Less Dead</u>, Denise Mina's protagonist, Dr. Margo Dunlap goes on a search for her birth mother following the death of her adoptive mother. What Margo finds on her search shakes her bearings and unsettles her life. Mina offers darkness and humor in this novel, and contrasts characters whose life choices made all the difference.</p>	
<u>The Less Dead</u>	Mina, Denise	***	<u>1/26/21</u>		
<u>Tokyo Ueno Station</u>	Miri, Yu	****	<u>1/16/21</u>	<p>Unreachable. I wouldn't have noticed Yu Miri's novel titled, <u>Tokyo Ueno Station</u>, had it not won a National Book Award. Protagonist Kazu has led a sad and unlucky life, much of connected to Tokyo's Ueno Station. At so many times during his life, better times were so close, just outside his reach. Instead, he faced loss, grief, homelessness and scraping along on the margins of the busy city life around him. The descriptive language soars with beauty on these pages and builds melancholy in a reader with each passing page. Readers who enjoy finely written literary fiction are those most likely to enjoy this haunting character and his story through life and after death.</p>	

The Easter Confession

Monagan, Charles

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.



Death in Her Hands

Moshfegh, Ottessa

3/25/21

Imagination. The novel titled, Death in Her Hands, by Ottessa Moshfegh starts with a bucolic image of a woman talking a walk into the woods with Charlie the dog. After she finds a mysterious note, her imagination leads her into a fog of suspense, horror and uncertainty about the difference between illusion and reality. The dark humor in the novel and finely written prose will appeal to those readers who enjoy fine writing.

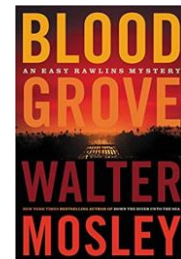


Blood Grove

Mosley, Walter

3/9/21

Danger. The fifteenth novel by Walter Mosley to feature Los Angeles private detective Easy Rawlins is titled, Blood Grove. Fans of this series will delight in the return of a cast of endearing and complex characters, an interesting plot, and a clear-eyed and uncompromising view of what it is like to live as a Black man in L.A. in 1969. After Easy reluctantly takes on a client's case, he finds himself in danger from which escape will be a close-run thing. Easy calls for help from reliable friends and navigates a path that involves justice and integrity. It comes as no surprise to fans that once Easy takes on a case, he will see it to some final resolution.



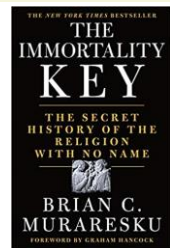
<u>Summerwater</u>	Moss, Sarah	****	<u>4/27/21</u>	<p>Rain. Sarah Moss wastes no words in her novel titled, <u>Summerwater</u>. All of domestic life becomes condensed into one rainy day on vacation in Scotland. She develops characters smoothly, sometimes through just a few sentences of the character's inner thoughts. We picture the setting easily when we learn of poor construction of tiny cabins too close together on a loch. As the rain falls, we feel the frustration of vacationers who are not receiving the value they desired. We feel the boredom as neighbors turn their focus on each other. Then there's that one cabin of partygoers, oblivious to their proximity to others who may be disturbed by their rowdiness. I enjoyed spending this particular rainy day in Scotland, thanks to Moss' fine writing.</p>	
------------------------------------	-------------	------	--------------------------------	--	---

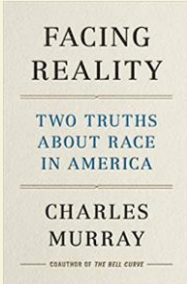
[The Immortality Key: The Secret History of the Religion with No Name](#)

Muraresku, Brian

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.



<u>Facing Reality: Two Truths About Race in America</u>	Murray, Charles	****	<u>9/16/21</u>	<p>Provoking. Libertarian Charles Murray joins the fray on the topic of systemic racism in a new book titled, <u>Facing Reality: Two Truths About Race in America</u>. Murray offers numeric ammunition to those who deny racism by recycling some of his prior analysis of intelligence and criminality. His book title alone stakes the high ground in any debate by claiming what he offers is both reality and capital "T" truth. He also dismisses any contrary views by describing that he is presenting</p>	
---	-----------------	------	--------------------------------	---	---

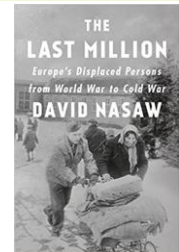
			data, not opinion, that differences in outcome by group are explained by White and Asian cognitive superiority and Black and Hispanic high violent crime rates. Any barriers to upward societal mobility by group can be explained by the numbers he presents, proving there is no such thing as systemic racism. I find Murray's presentation disingenuous, but I liked this book because I can see that because of his facile acceptance of false assumptions, his argument falls totally apart, and those who look to him for a counter argument to systemic racism will find a lot of data but no insight.	
--	--	--	--	--

The Last Million: Europe's Displaced Persons from World War to Cold War

Nasaw, David

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.



<u>That Time of Year</u>	NDiaye, Marie	*****	<u>3/25/21</u>	Overstayed. Fans of <i>The Twilight Zone</i> or Alfred Hitchcock are those readers most likely to enjoy Marie NDiaye's novel titled, <u>That Time of Year</u> . Instead of returning to Paris from their rural vacation on August 31, a family waited one more day in the village, a decision with dramatic consequences. The horror in this weird and odd story kept me turning pages, always agog at how everything can change overnight.	
--------------------------	---------------	-------	----------------	--	--

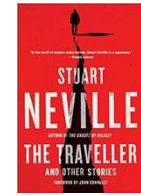


The Traveller and Other Stories

Neville, Stuart

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.



New Waves

Nguyen, Kevin

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.

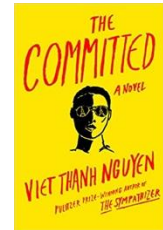


The Committed

Nguyen, Viet Thanh

9/8/21

Paris. Five years after his award-winning novel titled, *The Sympathizer*, Viet Thanh Nguyen reprises many of those characters for a novel titled, The Committed, set in Paris when the Sympathizer arrives there in the early 1980s to join a criminal gang and deal drugs. Nguyen explores big question in this novel about post-colonial culture. Characters are caught between conflicting ideas and opposing moral codes. The past is never far behind, and the future remains cloudy.



Fraternity

Nugent, Benjamin

2/4/21

Association. Benjamin Nugent reveals all the ingredients of our human stew in the stories collected in a volume titled, Fraternity. We find sweet, savory and sour tastes inside these stories about college life through the lens of a fraternity, its members and those with whom they relate. There were times when I could almost smell the air inside. There's darkness and tenderness in these stories highlighting the struggles of boys trying to figure out what this stage of growing up is all about. While the men in these stories are somewhat predictable characters, the range comes



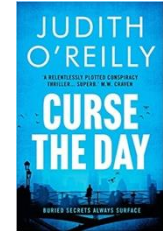
				<p>from the strong female characters, one of whom is called “god.” Nugent updates Greek life on campus in ways that are in the context of tradition, but authentically set within today’s culture.</p>	
<u>What Are You Going Through</u>	Nunez, Sigrid	****	<u>4/27/21</u>	<p>Empathy. Will we be prepared to offer a friend what they need when the time comes? In her novel titled, <u>What Are You Going Through</u>, Sigrid Nunez explores empathy, and what it means to be a companion to others as they face struggles. When all else passes away, what’s left is love. In this novel, we see the enduring love of a long friendship. Nunez finds words to express what we can often feel and never talk about. We journey through life together. With some or with many, but not alone. There’s a grace in this novel, and an emotional resonance that captures the essence of life lived together, in love.</p>	
<u>The Road Trip</u>	O’Leary, Beth	****	<u>11/22/21</u>	<p>Light. When you’re in the mood for a funny and lighthearted relationship novel, consider reading Beth O’Leary’s novel titled, <u>The Road Trip</u>. A funny thing happens on the way to a wedding in remote Scotland: two cars crash, and one is not drivable. Since they were going to the same event, the passengers decide to travel together in the less damaged vehicle. The awkwardness is that two of the passengers broke up two years earlier, and it’s a small car and a long drive for Dylan and Addie. This sweet and messy story develops quickly and ends easily, hitting all the light touches that provide brief, mindless entertainment.</p>	

Curse the Day

O'Reilly, Judith

8/19/21

Syd. Judith O'Reilly takes a trope we think has been exhausted and she finds a new way to engage readers with her thriller novel titled, Curse the Day. A tech genius named Tobias Hawke has made a breakthrough in A.I. with a machine learning device named Syd. If Syd acquires consciousness, what will Syd do, especially to humans? This technothriller pops with action from the first exciting page, and the intensity never breaks. The cast of characters provide great interest to readers and the pace will excite all those who love this genre.

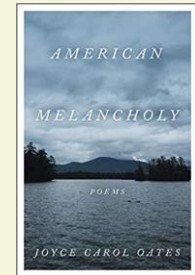


American Melancholy

Oates, Joyce Carol

8/5/21

Poems. I couldn't recall the last time I read poetry by the prolific author Joyce Carol Oates, so I savored her book titled, American Melancholy, her first poetry collection in a quarter-century. I found myself early in the morning, reading a poem or two once twice silently, and then once aloud to hear the language proclaimed. What readers find in this collection is an eclectic mix of observations and reflections into the essence of a thought or feeling filtered by a very talented artist. I've been trying to read more poetry this year, and I found this collection to be a great pleasure.

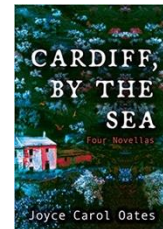


Cardiff, By the Sea


Oates, Joyce Carol

1/16/21

Disturbing. There are haunting settings and chilling stories in the four novellas by Joyce Carol Oates collected in a book titled, Cardiff, By the Sea. The threats to the fully formed characters in these novellas are usually chilling, and Oates' insight into psychological states allows readers to experience goosebumps of our

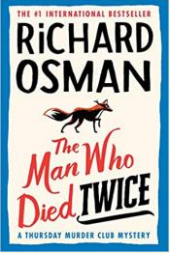


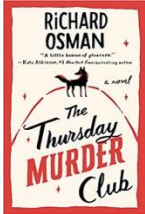
own as we read the expertly crafted prose. I found myself embraced by a sensation of dread as I turned these pages. If that's how you'd like to be entertained, consider reading this book.

<u>A Promised Land</u>	Obama, Barack	*****	<u>1/16/21</u>	<p>Descriptive. The first volume of Barack Obama's presential memoir is titled, <u>A Promised Land</u>. Using a conversational writing style that flows easily, Obama describes the job of president with clarity, giving readers a feel for the role as a job. The text is thoughtful and introspective, and he presents his recollections in ways that allow readers to feel like close observers of what happened during his presidential terms of office. He offers more personal information that I expected, and a vulnerability that came across as refreshing and candid. Readers interested in hearing the former president's thoughts are those most likely to enjoy this finely written memoir.</p>	
--	---------------	-------	--------------------------------	---	---

<u>The Killing Hills</u>	Offutt, Chris	****	<u>12/13/21</u>	<p>Betrayal. Chris Offutt's novel titled, <u>The Killing Hills</u>, appeals to fans of thrillers in multiple ways. Protagonist Mick Hardin is a complex and compelling character who reveals himself as skilled investigator, supportive brother, insubordinate employee, and distracted husband. The rural setting and a suspicious death allow Offutt to riff on the alliances and secrets among families in the Kentucky hollers. Mick's sister is a local sheriff who asks her brother to help her out on her first murder case. The intensity builds on every page, and the tight prose and clear dialogue</p>	
--	---------------	------	---------------------------------	--	---

propels readers at a quick pace toward a satisfying conclusion.

<u>The Man Who Died Twice</u>	Osman, Richard	*****	<u>10/25/21</u>	<p>Curiosity. The second installment of The Thursday Murder Club series by Richard Osman is a novel titled, <u>The Man Who Died Twice</u>. While readers of the earlier novel will have some advantages with characters, this mystery can stand on its own. When someone from Elizabeth's past arrives looking for help, the club members rally to his aid. Osman lays out lots of twists and plot lines along with multiple levels of meaning for the title, to the satisfaction of those readers who love good mysteries. There's clever writing, lots of wit, and unending curiosity by the murder club members. By the end of the novel, the resolution leaves nothing undone. I was entertained and delighted by reading this novel.</p>	
---	----------------	-------	---------------------------------	--	---

<u>The Thursday Murder Club</u>	Osman, Richard	****	<u>3/9/21</u>	<p>Kindness. I thoroughly enjoyed reading Richard Osman's debut novel titled, <u>The Thursday Murder Club</u>. At its core, this is an engaging mystery novel with twists that will satisfy fans of this genre. The complex characters, especially a female detective and four septuagenarians, treat one another with respect and kindness as they sleuth together to solve a case. Osman is often funny and always clever in this novel which will appeal to fans of mysteries and crime fiction.</p>	
---	----------------	------	-------------------------------	--	--

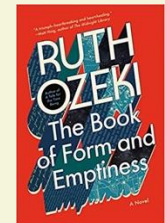
<u>The Hole</u>	Oyamada, Hiroko	*****	<u>4/27/21</u>	<p>Dreamy. I love a novel in which illusion and reality drift seamlessly in and out of the narrative. Horoko Oyamada's novel titled, <u>The Hole</u>, presents readers with the world that protagonist Asa finds when she moves with her new husband to the countryside where he is now working. While her husband works, Asa explores her new rural surroundings, and what she sees makes her question her sanity. We are all looking for our place in the world, and Oyamada shows how some creatures find places that are fit perfectly for them, while others search endlessly for the right fit. Isolation and disconnection have become unexpected parts of contemporary life around the world during the COVID-19 epidemic. This novel captures those sensations and makes readers disturbed and uncomfortable in all the right ways.</p>	
<u>Peaces</u>	Oyeyemi, Helen	*****	<u>5/27/21</u>	<p>Train. Amtrak Joe has never been on a sleeper train like the one in Helen Oyeyemi's novel titled, <u>Peaces</u>. A kind aunt gives Otto and Xavier Shin a special gift: a train journey on The Lucky Day. All journeys involve mystery and discovery, and Otto, Xavier and their mongoose become bound closely together thanks to this magical train trip. Many readers will find this novel weird, and others will see it as wonderful. I had to grab the straphanger at times to lurch with Oyeyemi's unexpected leaps. Readers who enjoy eccentric literary fiction are those most likely to enjoy this novel.</p>	

The Book of Form and Emptiness

Ozeki, Ruth

10/15/21

Zen. The key question, what is real, is at the heart of Ruth Ozeki's novel titled, The Book of Form and Emptiness. Protagonist Benny Oh turns twelve-years-old in the year that his father is killed. He and his mother, Annabelle, are overcome with grief and try to adjust to life after that tragedy. Benny begins hearing from objects, and the more things Annabelle collects as she begins hoarding, the louder the voices in Benny's mind. Ozeki takes readers into aspects of Zen that flow smoothly through this narrative. We begin to find acceptance of the impermanence of things. We notice objects more closely. Even the book becomes a voice and character in the novel. We appreciate the messages from poems, and the ways in which the library provides both refuge and rescue for troubled lives. I encourage fans of literary fiction to surrender to Ozeki in this finely written novel and let her take you through an exploration that faces the question of what is real. Along the way, there's an enchanting story and characters that we come to love.

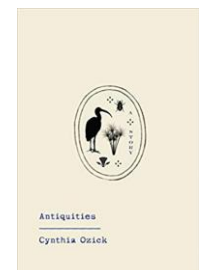


Antiquities

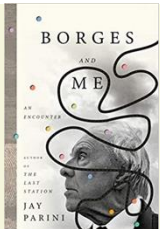

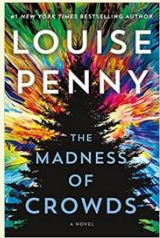
Ozick, Cynthia

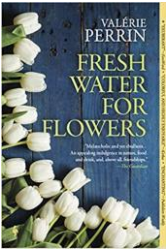
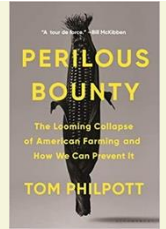

6/19/21

Memory. Lovers of language will relish Cynthia Ozick's novel titled, Antiquities. Lloyd Wilkinson Petrie struggles to write a memoir and encounters challenging aspects of his fading memory. Ozick reveals the pervasive aspects of anti-Semitism that defined the culture of Temple Academy for Boys, where Petrie had been a trustee. Ozick does more in writing a short phrase than many writers

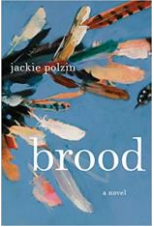
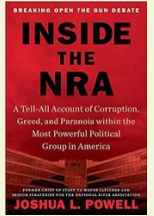
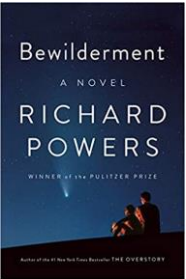


<p><u>Last Best Hope: America in Crisis and Renewal</u></p>	<p>Packer, George</p>	<p>*****</p>	<p>achieve in dozens of pages. The result is a story rich in irony and packed with insight.</p> <p>Overview. George Packer overviews the contemporary situation in the United States and proposes that there are four narratives running simultaneously and dominating sectors of American life. In his book titled, <u>Last Best Hope: America in Crisis and Renewal</u>, he names these narratives: Free America, Smart America, Real America, and Just America. Packer suggests that these narratives may be barriers to sustaining democracy, and he suggests the development of a common identity. It turns out that “we” are our last best hope and can repair our fractured society. Readers interested in a cogent narrative about contemporary public affairs are those most likely to enjoy this finely written book.</p>	
<p><u>Love and Other Crimes</u></p>	<p>Paretsky, Sara</p>	<p>****</p>	<p>Compact. I’ve enjoyed every novel by Sara Paretsky featuring Chicago private detective V.I Warshawski. I don’t recall reading her short fiction, so I looked forward to a collection of her stories titled, <u>Love and Other Crimes</u>. Vic shows up in some of these stories, but this is certainly not a one-protagonist collection. Paretsky shows that she can tell a compelling story in a compact form and develop interesting characters with efficiency. Readers who enjoy crime fiction and short stories will find a lot to enjoy in this collection.</p>	

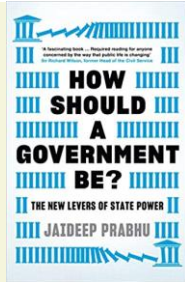
<u>Borges and Me</u>	Parini, Jay	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
<u>Dolly Parton, Songteller: My Life in Lyrics</u>	Parton, Dolly	*****	<u>2/13/21</u>	<p>Joyful. The title of Dolly Parton's memoir titled, <u>Dolly Parton, Songteller: My Life in Lyrics</u>, conveys how she thinks of her life's work: she tells stories in her songs. Leave it to Dolly to come with her own word, songteller, to describe this essential aspect of herself. With joyful enthusiasm, she tells readers about loads of her songs and the personal stories or writing process that led her to finding the right way to tell a story in song. The book contains lots of pictures to support the memories from sixty years of songtelling. Readers who love Dolly and country music, as well as those looking for a joy vaccine are those most likely to enjoy this cheerful book.</p>	
<u>The Madness of Crowds</u>	Penny, Louise	*****	<u>9/23/21</u>	<p>Correlations. The ways in which groups can become so caught up in misinformation and delusions rose to a crescendo in many places as the coronavirus spread. In the seventeenth novel by Louise Penny to feature Chief Inspector Gamache titled, <u>The Madness of Crowds</u>, spurious correlations by a statistician rile up a crowd and infect a community. When murder in Three Pines follows, Gamache and his team need to solve a case that is too close to home. On top of all the usual fine writing in this series, Penny adds a heavy moral question</p>	

				for society that makes the novel all the more engaging.	
<u>Fresh Water for Flowers</u>	Perrin, Valérie	****	<u>7/22/21</u>	<p>Cemetery. Few readers would have imagined that work as a resident cemetery caretaker could be as life affirming and ebullient as it is for Violette Toussaint, protagonist of Valérie Perrin's debut novel titled, <u>Fresh Water for Flowers</u>. Perrin tones down some of the cheer with dark stories including sexual violence, but we observe Violette create a satisfying life despite obstacles. Violette observes with compassion, listens with empathy, and greets all with hospitality. As we accompany Violette in her life, we feel the depth of relationship and friendship and feel wonderful about life, even as we spend time in a cemetery.</p>	
<u>Perilous Bounty: The Looming Collapse of American Farming and How We Can Prevent It</u>	Philpott, Tom	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
<u>The Secret Lives of Church Ladies</u>	Philyaw, Deesha	****	<u>2/23/21</u>	<p>Desire. The characters in the nine stories by Deesha Philyaw in the collection titled, <u>The Secret Lives of Church Ladies</u>, all find themselves struggling with desire and passion. The wide age range of the Black women in these stories provides a variety of ways in which relationships develop. Their longings are usually hidden but are no less real. Philyaw's insight into human behavior is wise, and her prose and character development will bring each character to vivid display within a handful</p>	

<u>Elena Knows</u>	Piñeiro, Claudia	****	12/18/21	<p>of pages. There's an intensity underlying each story, and Philyaw manages the exposure of that with great skill.</p> <p>Mothering. There's pain on every page of Claudia Piñeiro's novel titled, <u>Elena Knows</u>. Protagonist Elena will not accept that her daughter, Rita, committed suicide. Despite the pain of Parkinson's, Elena traverses Buenos Aires to solve the mystery of her daughter's death. We join Elena on this journey as Piñeiro explores the topic of the control of women's bodies and the relationship between mothers and daughters. Piñeiro leads readers to view the world as it is and to show us who we are whether we want to accept that or not.</p>	
<u>Lake Life</u>	Poissant, David James	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
<u>This Is Your Mind on Plants</u>	Pollan, Michael	****	8/26/21	<p>Trio. I find that when I read Michael Pollan's books, I begin to modify the way I think about some things that he explores. In his book titled, <u>This Is Your Mind on Plants</u>, Pollan offers perspectives on three plants: opium, caffeine and mescaline, and the ways in which those plants interact with human bodies and minds. We learn some history from Pollan, a lot of biology, much about the mind and drug policy. While I confess to have been jacked up as usual on my drug of choice while I read this book sipping tea and coffee, most readers can enjoy it while on none, any, or</p>	

				all the trio of plants explored in the book. I plan to stick with just the caffeine, thanks.	
<u>Brood</u>	Polzin, Jackie	*****	<u>10/8/21</u>	<p>Chickens. Could it really be that the meaning of life has everything to do with the chickens? Jackie Polzin's debut novel titled, <u>Brood</u>, pulls readers into the story of a nameless narrator who wants to keep her four chickens alive through a brutal Minnesota winter. We have all the other building blocks of life in this novel: family, predators, and hope. We spend a year over the course of this book with interesting characters and chickens, laughing and grieving, in the cycles we experience in every well-lived life. Polzin's fine writing will appeal to all readers who appreciate literary fiction.</p>	
<u>Inside the NRA: A Tell-All Account of Corruption, Greed, and Paranoia within the Most Powerful Political Group in America</u>	Powell, Josh	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
<u>Bewilderment</u>	Powers, Richard	*****	<u>10/15/21</u>	<p>Intensity. I still ache from the intensity of reading Richard Powers novel titled, <u>Bewilderment</u>. We meet Theo Byrne an overworked astrobiologist grieving the death of his wife, and trying to care for their son, Robin, who is on the autism spectrum. Robin has focused on the plight of endangered species, and we feel for him and for Theo as they seem engaged with what's critically important but disconnected by how others expect them to behave. Father and son find solace in the wild and encounter indifference at home to</p>	

the plight facing all life on earth. Theo and Robin see the world in ways that everyone should. This novel is a song of love and loss that penetrates a reader's indifference with an intensity that cries out for our own engagement with what matters.

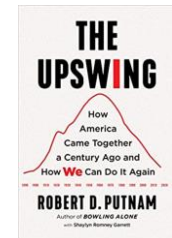
<u>How Should a Government Be?" The Lew Levers of State Power</u>	Prabhu, Jaideep	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
---	-----------------	--------	--	----------------------	---

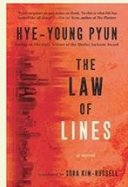
The Upswing: How America Came Together a Century Ago and How We Can Do It Again

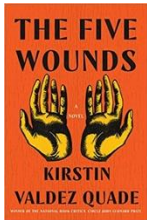
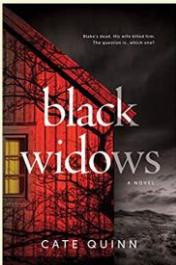
Putnam, Robert D.

6/19/21

Hope. Most readers will finish Robert D. Putnam's book titled, The Upswing: How America Came Together a Century Ago and How We Can Do It Again, with hope that better times can be ahead. Through alternating storytelling and presentation of statistics, Putnam describes a century-long transformation from I to We and back to I. Putnam proposes that we are capable of moving again to We. He makes a strong case that a society based on community can be achieved. We've done it before and we can do it again, and we should.



<u>The Law of Lines</u>	Pyun, Hye-Young	***	<u>9/16/21</u>	Debt. Fans of finely written literary fiction are those readers most likely to enjoy Hye-Young Pyun's novel titled, <u>The Law of Lines</u> . We find parallel stories of two women, Se-oh and Ki-jeong as they deal with loss, grief, and debt. A crime investigation ties the two stories together and the links they discover are thrilling and dark. I found myself feeling some dread as I read this novel, and	
-------------------------	-----------------	-----	----------------	---	---

				<p>uncomfortable in the darkness. When debt overwhelms, we feel its power.</p> <p>Resonance. Life is messy. We often know what we need to do but don't have a clue how to do it. We find ways to escape or cope with what life throws at us. All those aspects of life resonate in Kristen Valdez Quade's debut novel titled, <u>The Five Wounds</u>. We spend a year in New Mexico with the Padilla family and observe how they take the next steps in their lives. Quade describes their outer lives and discloses the inner lives of a fascinating cast of characters. We find hope and despair, love and loss. We accompany the family in their pain and wonder with them when the suffering will finally end. We also laugh and watch redemption and resilience play out while life continues to stay messy.</p>	
<u>The Five Wounds</u>	Quade, Kristin Valdez	****	<u>10/15/21</u>		
<u>Black Widows</u>	Quinn, Cate	****	<u>11/16/21</u>	<p>Plural. Rest assured that Cate Quinn's novel titled, <u>Black Widows</u>, is not about spiders. Set in rural Utah, the novel explores the lives of a family practicing the tradition of plural marriage. The point of view shifts among three wives of Blake Nelson, and our understanding of these characters changes as the novel progresses. First wife Rachel seems obedient and reticent. Second wife Tina seems rebellious and unmoored. Young wife Emily seems naïve and frightened. Quinn develops each character with empathy and skill and moves them through a plot that will entertain most fiction fans.</p>	

[The Man in Milan](#)

Racanelli, Vito

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.

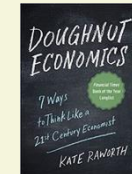


[Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist](#)

Raworth, Kate

[7/10/21](#)

Sustainability. Once you've seen the image of the doughnut illustrated and explained in Kate Raworth's book titled, [Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist](#), you're likely to remember it as you shake up your thinking about what you think you've learned about economics. Without quite saying bullshit or hogwash, Raworth explores a way to think about economics that deviates from where most economists have staked their careers. She offers a way to explore sustainability and reframes a way to think about economics. Her prose is straightforward, often playful, and she presents her views with clarity. In 2021, the city of Amsterdam has adopted Raworth's framework and other cities are in process of putting her theory into practice.



[Such a Fun Age](#)

Reid, Kiley

[3/9/21](#)


Uncomfortable. In her debut novel titled, [Such a Fun Age](#), Kiley Reid makes readers laugh and experience just the right amount of discomfort. Protagonist Emira Tucker is an underemployed Black twenty-five-year-old who works part-time as a typist and does babysitting for a wealthy White family. Reid unveils the contrasts in contemporary life based on race, class, and age cohort. Emira navigates life's challenges with great skill as she adapts



and adjusts to both the familiar and the new when it comes to working, dating or being racially profiled. Most readers will finish this novel thinking about privilege and rethinking what constitutes complicity with structural racism.

<p><u>Graceland, At Last: Notes on Hope and Heartache From the American South</u></p>	<p>Renkl, Margaret</p>	<p>*****</p>	<p><u>11/6/21</u></p>	<p>Columns. Margaret Renkl's column in <i>The New York Times</i> makes my "must read" list every Monday. Sixty of those columns from recent years have been collected and slightly revised for a book titled, <u>Graceland, At Last: Notes on Hope and Heartache From the American South</u>. What I want from a short essay is some observation and insight about the world that makes me think a little bit harder and longer about something important. These columns reflect observation and insight and wisdom that always encourages me to think. Renkl's prose is finely written, and whether you've read her before or start here, you're likely to find yourself thinking a little harder and longer about something.</p>	
<p><u>After the Fall: Being American in the World We've Made</u></p>	<p>Rhodes, Ben</p>	<p>*****</p>	<p><u>8/5/21</u></p>	<p>Identity. Forget for a moment that Ben Rhodes worked in the Obama White House, and approach his book titled, <u>After the Fall: Being American in the World We've Made</u>, with an open mind. Rhodes tells compelling stories in this book as he travels across the world. Rhodes writes with great skill as he tells his own story, examines American identity from multiple perspectives, and tells stories about the strengthening of authoritarianism in Russia, Hungary and China. Introspection can lead to insight that can encourage change. Rhodes has no policy proposals in</p>	

this book or cures for what ails us. He presents a view of American identity and the direction of changes throughout the world and encourages us to find patterns and insight. Change will be up to us, should we find the situation as gloomy as Rhodes see things. Rhodes knows how to turn a phrase and tell a story, so read this account whether you agree with his assessment of world affairs or not.

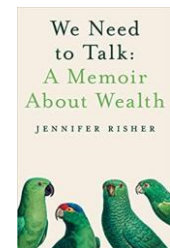
<u>The Discomfort of Evening</u>	Rijneveld, Marieke Lucas	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
--	--------------------------	--------	--	----------------------	---

[We Need to Talk: A Memoir About Wealth](#)


Risher, Jennifer

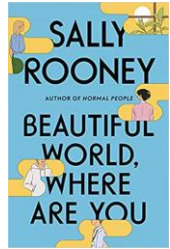
9/16/21

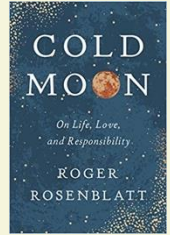
Disconnected. It's hard to talk about money. I recall some decades ago making conversation with another parent during parent's weekend at a university. From my clueless ignorance, I asked a dairy farmer how many cows he had, not realizing that that question was the equivalent of asking to peek at a statement of his financial assets. In her memoir titled, [We Need to Talk: A Memoir About Wealth](#), Jennifer Risher shares her own life experience with money, and how upon achieving significant wealth, she found herself conflicted. I found myself wincing often as I read this book, realizing how disconnected Risher's life is from all but a tiny proportion of our planet's population. Her memoir involves a privileged first world millionaire trying not to decide how much private jet travel can be done as a



family before the children feel entitled. I encourage readers of this memoir to consider the experience like a trip to the zoo: the observation of a species not quite like our own.

<u>Black Sun</u>	Roanhorse, Rebecca	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
----------------------------------	--------------------	--------	--	----------------------	---

<u>Beautiful World, Where Are You</u>	Rooney, Sally	*****	<u>10/8/21</u>	<p>Transcendental. The richness and depth of Sally Rooney's novel titled, <u>Beautiful World, Where Are You</u>, blew me away. She had me with the interesting relationships among characters Eileen and Simon, and Alex and Felix. Her dialogue and description make readers feel present and engaged with their attraction and the ways they interacted. At some point I found myself exploring Metaphysics as Rooney teaches about goodness, beauty, truth and unity, those transcendental properties of being. Take this finely written novel on any level of meaning you want: it's terrific.</p>	
---	---------------	-------	--------------------------------	---	---

<u>Cold Moon: On Life, Love, and Responsibility</u>	Rosenblatt, Roger	****	<u>1/26/21</u>	<p>Fragments. Those who pay attention to the night sky know that the full moon that arrives in December is called the "cold moon." I had the good fortune to read Roger Rosenblatt's wise book titled, <u>Cold Moon: On Life, Love, and Responsibility</u>, just after the latest cold moon arrived to announce the winter solstice. Acknowledging his own arrival in the winter phase of life, Rosenblatt offers in this book fragmentary reflections that celebrate being alive, that remind us of the</p>	
---	-------------------	------	--------------------------------	---	---

				<p>centrality of love, and that focus our attention on the meaning that we find when we extend care to others and become responsible to specific individuals. It can be easy to get distracted as we muddle through life, and in this wise book, Rosenblatt helps us gain and retain focus on those things that really matter. He brings light to the dark nights of winter.</p> <p>Artist. I'm a newcomer to the Lydia Chin and Bill Smith mystery series by S.J. Rozan, so I've probably missed a lot of the color contained within the novel titled, <u>The Art of Violence</u>. Since I enjoyed the novel, let's assume that it can stand alone for those who haven't read other books in this series and fans of the series may find additional reasons to like it. A serial killer has been attacking women in New York City's contemporary art scene. Lydia and Bill have been called in to look for answers, while the bodies continue to pile up. An artist can't remember whether he committed these murders or not. Meeting this quirky artist in print is one good reason to give this mystery your time.</p>	
<u>The Art of Violence</u>	Rozan, S.J.	****	<u>10/8/21</u>		
<u>Super Host</u>	Russo, Kate	****	<u>12/13/21</u>	<p>Questions. In her debut novel titled, <u>Super Host</u>, Kate Russo tells the story of a painter and three women in his life. At age fifty-five artist Bennett Driscoll's life seems rudderless. Among the questions he addresses in this novel is what does he want? The three women that come into his life open him to new possibilities. Russo will make many readers laugh and the portrait she draws will lead to questions of</p>	

				our own as we consider what's next in our lives.	
<u>Convince Me</u>	Sadowsky, Nina	****	<u>4/13/21</u>	<p>Quartet. Four characters form something of a quadrant in helping readers sort out Nina Sadowsky's novel titled, <u>Convince Me</u>. Justin Childs connects three other characters, and he is not who he seemed to be. Suddenly dead from a car accident, we learn about Justin from three narrators: his wife Annie, his mother Carol, and his friend and business partner, Will. Sadowsky's fine writing unravels Justin as each of the three narrators comes to terms with the reality and the illusions. We begin to understand how Justin the charmer developed the capability to deceive with great skill. The narrative twists brought me great reading pleasure and I enjoyed spending time with this intriguing quartet.</p>	
<u>Survive the Night</u>	Sager, Riley	****	<u>9/16/21</u>	<p>Movies. The thrilling action of Riley Sager's novel titled, <u>Survive the Night</u>, takes place on a single night, mostly in a rideshare car. Protagonist Charlie has decided to take time off college following the murder of her roommate. Charlie's lifelong love of cinema has led her to see the world as if we were all in a film. She regularly zones out from reality as her brain plays a reel for her. Not long into the car trip home, she begins to suspect that the stranger driving the car might be her roommate's murderer. Fans of mystery thrillers are those readers most likely to enjoy this novel, packed with twists and with interesting characters.</p>	

China Room

Sahota, Sunjeev

12/6/21

Confinement. Two time periods and two characters link in the finely written novel by Sunjeev Sahota titled, China Room. We meet Mehar in 1929 as a young bride in Punjab, confined with two other brides, who were wed to three brothers in a single ceremony. Around them, the Indian independence movement searches for recruits. Seventy years later in the same Punjab setting, we meet Mehar's great-grandson sent here from England to recover from drug addiction. Sahota explores all the tension between individuals and those with power over them. Fans of literary fiction are those readers most likely to enjoy the finely written prose and the deft exploration of human resistance and resiliency. Readers who just like a good story will find one here that's memorable and well-told.

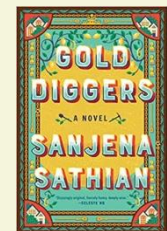


Gold Diggers

Sathian, Sanjena

6/24/21

Alchemy. Be prepared to laugh and nod as you read Sanjena Sathian's debut novel titled, Gold Diggers. Also, be patient with receiving a dose of magical realism. Sathian explores what immigrants are willing to do to make it in America. We meet high school student Neil Narayan who wants to meet his parent's expectations to be accepted into an Ivy League university. Neil is smitten by neighbor Anita Dayal and discovers that her family has found a way to practice alchemy: converting gold into the means of achievement in the United States. I enjoyed this creative story and look forward to ordering Anita's special lemonade sometime soon.

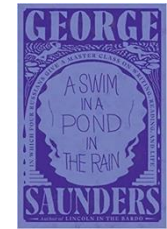


A Swim in a Pond in the Rain: In Which Four Russians Give a Master Class on Writing, Reading, and Life

Saunders, George

4/22/21

Views. Teachers never have answers, but the best teachers lead us toward finding our own answers to the right questions. In a delightful book titled, A Swim in a Pond in the Rain: In Which Four Russians Give a Master Class on Writing, Reading, and Life, Syracuse professor and prominent writer George Saunders uses seven short stories to help readers answer questions. We hear Saunders' views on these stories, and we join him in exploring answers to all the right questions that lead us toward finding views of our own. Writers need readers. Readers who approach texts with good questions and who develop cogent views often find great joy in reading. For a glimpse of what the world of closer reading can provide to you, read this exploration of how great writing works and how our mind behaves as we connect with the words we read.

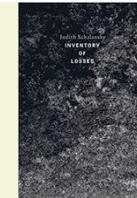


An Inventory of Losses

Schalansky, Judith

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.



Jeeves and the Leap of Faith

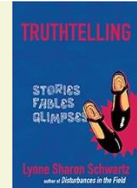
Schott, Ben

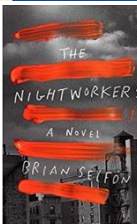
2/4/21

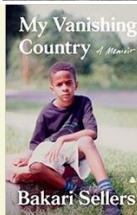
Wordplay. The P.G. Wodehouse estate made a great decision when they selected Ben Schott to reprise Jeeves and Wooster. The second novel from this project is titled, Jeeves and the Leap of Faith. Schott gets it all right: the wordplay, puns, escapades and eccentricities. I even laughed about wallpaper as selected by Jeeves and Wooster. Fans will especially enjoy the way that the Drones club chooses

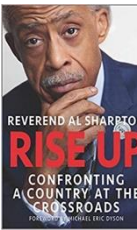


to solve their financial predicament. Readers looking for entertainment and humor, especially Wodehouse fans, are those most likely to enjoy this novel. Schott offers a finely written homage: fresh action, true to the original.

<u>Truthtelling: Stories, Fables, Glimpses</u>	Schwartz, Lynne Sharon	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
--	------------------------	--------	--	----------------------	---

<u>The Nightworkers</u>	Selfon, Brian	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
---	---------------	--------	--	----------------------	---

<u>My Vanishing Country</u>	Sellers, Bakari	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
---	-----------------	--------	--	----------------------	---

<u>Rise Up: Confronting a Country at the Crossroads</u>	Sharpton, Reverend Al	*****	<u>1/26/21</u>	<p>Activism. Reverend Al Sharpton offers a commentary about contemporary social justice issues in his book titled, <u>Rise Up: Confronting a Country at the Crossroads</u>. This lifelong preacher knows how to listen and how to speak. This book presents a message about activism and its importance as we respond to injustice. Sharpton invites us to examine our core values and apply them to the challenges of modern life. Street protests can make many citizens uncomfortable while allowing a voice for the victims of injustice to be heard. In the</p>	
---	-----------------------	-------	--------------------------------	---	---

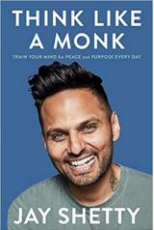
calmness of wherever it is you read, consider absorbing this book and finding the form of activism that you find appropriate to meet the challenges of this time in America.

Think Like a Monk:
Train Your Mind
for Peace and
Purpose Every Day

Shetty, Jay

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.



Lift. If you're likely to ready only one book this summer, consider Maggie Shipstead's novel titled, Great Circle. Fans of historical fiction will find a compelling story about Marian Graves through most of the 20th century. After Marian and her brother, Jamie, are orphaned and rescued from a sinking ship, they are raised in Montana by their uncle whose neglect makes them self-sufficient. Marian falls in love with aviation when a biplane comes to town. At two critical points in her life, she is asked what she would like, and both times she answers that she wants to fly. In the first case, she wants to learn to fly an airplane. In the second, she wants to circumnavigate the earth from pole to pole. Shipstead enhances the total novel by adding a contemporary story in which a movie is being made of Marian's life. There's a big cast of compelling characters, engaging stories set in the past and present, and fine writing over the course of six hundred pages. If that doesn't lift your summer to a new level, consider looking skyward every

Great Circle

Shipstead, Maggie

6/8/21



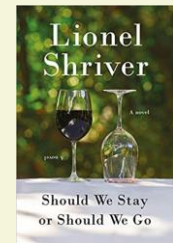
now and again as you read this novel, and think about the lift that Marian achieved throughout her life, and feel great about the world and all its possibilities for each of us.

Should We Stay or
Should We Go

Shriver, Lionel

6/24/21

Exits. The protagonists of Lionel Shriver's novel titled, Should We Stay or Should We Go, are looking for ways to address the reality of their mortality. Husband and wife Cyril and Kay are medical professionals who have watched the elderly depart the world in ways that are not gentle. While in their fifties, they decide to commit suicide together after their eightieth birthdays. Using humor regularly while exploring a sober topic, Shriver organizes her book into chapters in which Kay and Cyril exit the world in different ways. Readers in long term relationships will recognize the humanity of these characters and their patterns of communication and interaction. We laugh at the ways in which they agree and disagree, and how they deviate from plans in ways that we recognize as fully human. Beyond a certain age, it would be dysfunctional not to think about death. Shriver uses Kay and Cyril as stand-ins for us who will face a wide array of different things that happen as our lives end.

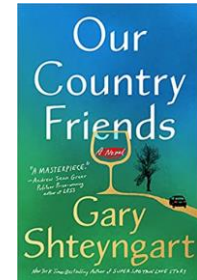


Our Country Friends

Shteyngart, Gary

12/6/21

Colony. Fans of literary fiction have a feast waiting in the form of Gary Shteyngart's novel titled, Our Country Friends. The ingredients involve the backdrop of the pandemic, a rural setting in the Hudson River Valley, a cast of eight eclectic characters, all shaken and stirred as they gather for six months of close living. We enjoy the funny and sad, the sweet and sour side by side. Perhaps it is too soon to stand back from our pandemic isolation and precautions to revisit our recent experience, but Shteyngart's fine writing offsets any concerns about a topic that's still raw and fresh.

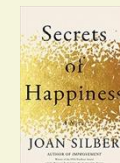


Secrets of Happiness

Silber, Joan

7/22/21

Structure. Joan Silber structures her novel titled, Secrets of Happiness, as linked stories and that was a perfect way to engage readers. Six narrators provide readers with deep perspectives as they reveal their part of the total story, and we continually improve our understanding of the "whole" story from these narrators. We never quite get a whole story, which is perfect. We get to observe different lives, some overlapping or connecting, and others oblivious to the world as experienced by other narrators. Happiness is different for these different narrators, and by the end of the novel, we are led to thinking about what happiness means for us. Silber's prose draws us in, her insights intrigue us, and her ability to show us a wide range of people just like us allows us to connect whatever dots we choose in our own pursuit of happiness.

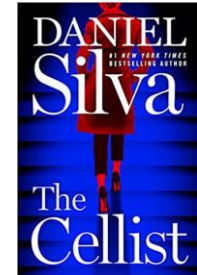


The Cellist

Silva, Daniel

7/22/21

Haydn. For the twenty-first installment of his series featuring Israeli spy Gabriel Allon, a novel titled, The Cellist, Daniel Silva adds music to the arts he includes after focusing on painting in all the earlier novels. Silva focuses on dirty Russian money and how it is being used to cause mischief in the West. There's an entity called the Haydn group that has a plan to foment violence in the United States, and Allon works on stopping the plot with help from a talented musician whose expertise from working at a dirty bank that launders Russian money helps Allon defeat the enemy. Fans of this series and protagonist are those most likely to enjoy this novel.



Perestroika in Paris

Smiley, Jane

1/5/21

Fun. Step aside, *Emily in Paris*, there's a new woman in town. For a fun reading adventure set in Paris, consider reading Jane Smiley's warm-hearted and entertaining novel titled, Perestroika in Paris. The protagonist is a thoroughbred horse named Perestroika, Paras for short, who wanders away after winning a race and settles into a months-long adventure in the heart of Paris. All the animal and human characters in this novel will make most readers smile, from the dog, Frida, to a young boy named Etienne, who cares for his nonagenarian great-grandmother, who is blind and deaf. This novel positively reeks with kindness, and I can think of no better way to be entertained during these interesting times.

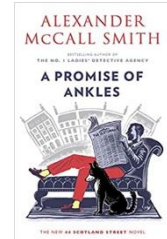


A Promise of Ankles

Smith, Alexander
McCall

4/13/21

Warmth. The fourteenth collection of the 44 Scotland Street serial that Alexander McCall Smith writes for *The Scotsman* is titled, A Promise of Ankles. Life in Edinburgh for the large cast of characters continues to present opportunities to live life to the fullest: love, loss, anticipation, adventures, and even ankles. I turn to Smith's writing when I need a good dose of warmth and an affirmation of the best qualities in human nature. Even those characters who can sour aspects of life for those underserving of malice seem to become disinfected of their malevolence by the sunshine of love and caring that comes from others.

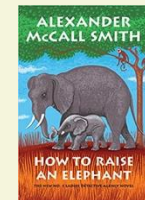


How to Raise an Elephant

Smith, Alexander
McCall

2/4/21

Forgiveness. The twenty-first installment in the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency series by Alexander McCall Smith is a novel titled, How to Raise an Elephant. Kindness abounds for the large recurring cast, and yes, there is an elephant. Mma Ramotswe has new neighbors and her white van experiences mishaps. After spending time with these endearing characters and drinking bush tea with them, fans will close this novel thinking about the importance of forgiveness and reflecting about where there is need for each of us to forgive or to be forgiven.

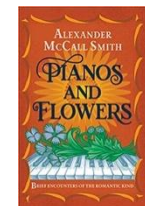


Pianos and Flowers: Brief Encounters of the Romantic Kind

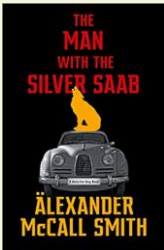
Smith, Alexander
McCall

4/27/21

Imagination. The power of imagination is on full display in Alexander McCall Smith's novel titled, Pianos and Flowers: Brief Encounters of the Romantic Kind. Each chapter opens with an old sepia image. What follows is the writer's imagination running off with what is seen



in the image and creating a story that will lead a reader to take another look at the photograph. I used my second examination of the photo as a jumping off point for my own imagination to conjure a different story. In Smith's imagination, all the images lead to stories of happiness, friendship, even love. Readers are reminded of how much a picture can contain, and how what looks simple can be deeper and more complex. Readers who love to indulge one's imagination can have a field day with this little book.

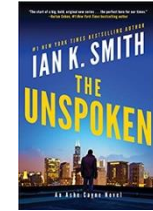
<u>The Man with the Silver Saab</u>	Smith, Alexander McCall	*****	<u>10/15/21</u>	<p>Dog. A dog named Martin achieve pride of place in a novel titled, <u>The Man with the Silver Saab</u>, the third installment in the series by Alexander McCall Smith featuring Malmö Detective Ulf Varg. As Martin has lost his hearing, Varg has taught him lip reading, and Varg proudly thinks this skill is unique in Sweden. In the perpetual contest between dog and squirrel, Martin lost a battle as the squirrel bit his nose, which the vet reattaches upside down. Love for dogs changes the tone of an expected disciplinary meeting with Varg's superior. In the background the Department of Sensitive Crime that Varg leads solves an interesting case. Along the way, we chuckle on most pages, and enjoy the characters that Smith develops in such an endearing way.</p>	
---	-------------------------	-------	---------------------------------	--	--

The Unspoken

Smith, Ian K.

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.

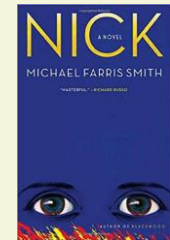


Nick

Smith, Michael Farris

1/26/21

Carraway. Have you ever imagined the life of the narrator of *The Great Gatsby*, Nick Carraway, and what experiences led him to his time in West Egg? In his novel titled, Nick, Michael Farris Smith offers readers one way to think differently about this fictional character. In Smith's telling, Nick has been traumatized by war and the loss of love. Instead of heading from the trenches of France back home to Minnesota, he changes trains in Chicago and goes to New Orleans where he loses himself in new ways and heals in others. After just a few pages, I gave little thought to Fitzgerald's Nick Carraway, because Smith's life of Nick before Gatsby offers a compelling story in its own right, and this complex Carraway will appeal to those readers who enjoy richly developed characters whether new, familiar, or imitated.




The Golden Thread: The Cold War and the Mysterious Death of Dag Hammarskjöld


Somaiya, Ravi


Unread


Shelf of Ennui 2021.



<u>The Lion's Den</u>	St. John, Katherine	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
---------------------------------------	---------------------	--------	--	----------------------	---

<u>The Disappearing Act</u>	Steadman, Catherine	*****	<u>7/17/21</u>	<p>Audition. Catherine Steadman draws readers inside the competitive Hollywood scene for her novel titled, <u>The Disappearing Act</u>, in which we see the lengths to which some actors will go to get a role. After an unexpected relationship breakup, protagonist Mia leaves England and looks for new acting roles in California. The plot takes a noir thriller twist following an audition where she meets an actress named Emily. Emily disappears and Mia becomes focused on finding her, while continuing to audition for parts. Fans of thrillers are those readers most likely to enjoy this novel.</p>	
---	---------------------	-------	--------------------------------	--	---

<u>Self Care</u>	Stein, Leigh	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
----------------------------------	--------------	--------	--	----------------------	--

<u>Dear Miss Kopp</u>	Stewart, Amy	*****	<u>3/25/21</u>	<p>War. In the sixth installment of the Kopp Sisters series by Amy Stewart, the United States has entered World War I and the three Kopp sisters are doing their part in the war effort. In the novel titled, <u>Dear Miss Kopp</u>, we find Constance performing intelligence work for the Bureau of Investigation in Washington, Fleurette entertaining the troops across the country, and Norma with her pigeons serving with</p>	
---------------------------------------	--------------	-------	--------------------------------	---	---

the Army Signal Corps in France. War changes life for each sister, and the letters the sisters exchange over the course of this book will engage most readers. Fans of historical fiction that doesn't drift far from the record are those most likely to enjoy this novel.

Miss Kopp Investigates

Stewart, Amy

10/15/21

Fleurette. The title of Amy Stewart's seventh novel featuring the Kopp Sisters, Miss Kopp Investigates, made me think that the sister doing the investigating would be Constance, fresh from wartime experience in Washington. Instead, in 1919, we find the investigator is Fleurette whose singing voice has failed her. As with the earlier novels, we find an engaging story packed with interesting and complex characters, drawn from the lives of real people. Fans of historical fiction with strong female characters will find a lot to enjoy in this novel and this series.



Want

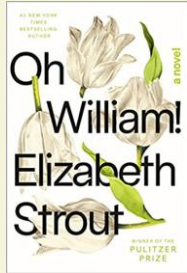
Strong, Lynn Steger

4/22/21

Precarious. In her novel titled, Want, Lynn Steger Strong dissects the fragility of contemporary life for those we used to be members of what we call the middle class. The desires of protagonist Elizabeth are not fleeting whims. It just seems that she is unable to get what she wants. Instead of getting a tenured university job with her English literature Ph.D., she has one job at a charter high school, and another as an adjunct at her alma mater. Her husband had the bad luck to lose his finance job at Lehman Brothers, and now does artisanal woodwork when he finds a client. There were big medical bills and past psychological strife and addiction. There



are now kids in their crowded Brooklyn one bedroom. There's a bankruptcy looming. A cherished friendship ruptured, and now that friend's life has also taken a turn for the worse. Therein we find what we all really want: kindness and the nourishment we can receive from friends. The litany of laments could have overpowered this narrative, but Strong's writing skill kept us facing reality while she led us to appreciate our vulnerability and the precarious nature of life for all of us.

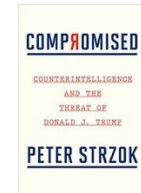
<p><u>Oh William!</u></p>	<p>Strout, Elizabeth</p>	<p>*****</p>	<p><u>11/22/21</u></p> <p>Marriage. The depth of insight about marriage throughout Elizabeth Strout's novel titled, <u>Oh William!</u>, will arrive to readers like a slowly rising tide. No one moment ratchets up the insight, but before we notice, we are in deep water. Strout reprises her complex protagonist, Lucy Barton, from two previous novels, and places her in a situation involving her first husband, William, as she grieves the death of her beloved second husband. William's recent losses have been sudden and despite their separation, there is no one else who understands Lucy and William as well as they know each other, for better and for worse. Readers roam in the inner spaces of these characters as we observe the way they present themselves to the world and recognize the disconnections that are familiar to all of us. Readers with experience of marriage are those most likely to savor all the wisdom and insight in this finely written novel.</p>	
---------------------------	--------------------------	--------------	--	--

Compromised:
Counterintelligence
and the Threat of
Donald J. Trump

Strzok, Peter

1/5/21

Perspective. After reading Peter Strzok's book titled, Compromised: Counterintelligence and the Threat of Donald J. Trump, I'm confident that he wishes that his FBI work had been completed professionally without his ever becoming known by the general public. In this book he tells his side of a story that played out in recent years based on the investigation of Russian meddling into the 2016 election and any complicity by the Trump campaign in that foreign interference. Depending on your political affiliation and the news outlets you follow, chances are you already know about Peter Strzok and have reached a conclusion about him and his work while at the FBI. I encourage you to give him a hearing by reading his version of what he did and be open to amending your perspective. I found his description of his role at the FBI to be informative, and the ways he described the nature of counterintelligence work were of great interest.



Dial A for Aunties

Sutanto, Jesse Q.


8/26/21

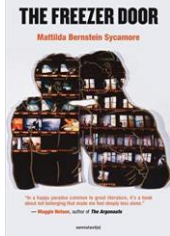
Slapstick. Don't let summer pass you by without reading a funny book for which you don't need to engage many parts of your brain. One to consider is Jesse Q. Sutanto's novel titled, Dial A for Aunties. After protagonist Meddelin Chan gets herself in a pickle, her mother gathers her sisters to get Meddie out of her predicament. The slapstick hijinks that follow provide great humor, and by the time Sutanto turns from comedy to romance, most readers are prepared to smile toward a happy ending for all. I read

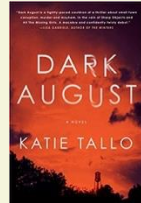


				<p>this novel in one sultry afternoon outdoors, and I felt the heat and humidity drift away as I relaxed with the story.</p> <p>Surreal. Fans of speculative fiction are those readers most likely to enjoy the seven science fiction short stories in a collection titled, <u>Terminal Boredom</u>, by the late Izumi Suzuki. These stories have only recently been translated into English, and most readers may be surprised that they were written four and five decades ago. Suzuki marvels at how we respond to all the weird things that happen. Within the darkness of her stories there's a resilience or response that makes the dystopia somewhat irrelevant, or perhaps normal.</p>	
<u>Terminal Boredom</u>	Suzuki, Izumi	*****	<u>11/22/21</u>		
<u>Olympus, Texas</u>	Swann, Stacey	*****	<u>11/6/21</u>	<p>Infidelity. The Greek myths visit the Lone Star State and the Briscoe family in Stacey Swann's debut novel titled, <u>Olympus, Texas</u>. First, draw the rural Texas town of your choice. Second, introduce the town's leading family and imbue them with hubris and infidelity. Third, multiply the characters and stir. The result gives a contemporary take on mythology and the glories of dysfunctional families. Grab some popcorn, watch the family fireworks, and try to predict the next wrong turn in Briscoe family life.</p>	
<u>Every Vow You Break</u>	Swanson, Peter	*****	<u>5/27/21</u>	<p>Island. Prepare for creepy chills as you read Peter Swanson's novel titled, <u>Every Vow You Break</u>. Protagonist Abigail Baskin marries Peter Lamb, who seems to treat her with every kindness. Wealthy Peter has arranged their honeymoon as a surprise, so Abigail finds herself at a luxury resort on a small island. Queue the minor key</p>	

music as Abigail faces threats and becomes terrorized. Things are not as they appear, and what Peter has in mind for his bride on this honeymoon will give readers chills.

<u>Good Company</u>	Sweeney, Cynthia D'Aprix	****	<u>5/27/21</u>	<p>Bonds. The people closest to us have the power to break our hearts. In her novel titled, <u>Good Company</u>, Cynthia D'Aprix Sweeney draws us into the bonds of marriage and friendship. When bonds are based on an expectation of loyalty, infidelity provides the kryptonite to weaken those bonds. When secrets are finally disclosed after a long period of time, the ability to restore bonds may be lost. Brave book clubs who are open to conversation about the fragility of our bonds will likely find members drawn closer together by a common understanding of our vulnerability to each other.</p>	
-------------------------------------	--------------------------	------	--------------------------------	--	---

<u>The Freezer Door</u>	Sycamore, Mattilda Bernstein	Unread	Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
---	------------------------------	--------	----------------------	--

<u>Dark August</u>	Tallo, Katie	****	<u>9/16/21</u>	<p>Inheritance. Katie Tallo's thrilling debut novel titled, <u>Dark August</u>, introduces readers to a strong female protagonist, Augusta "Gus" Monet, who we begin to care deeply about from the beginning of the novel. Her listless life becomes enlivened when she learns that her last living relative has died and she claims her inheritance. What follows is a well-paced pursuit of uncovering secrets and</p>	
------------------------------------	--------------	------	--------------------------------	---	---

				<p>searching for the truth. Tallo's writing offers realistic dialogue, supportive narration, and complex and interesting characters.</p> <p>Sinatra. The second novel by Jake Tapper to feature protagonists Charlie and Margaret Marder it titled, <u>The Devil May Dance</u>. Set in the early 1960s, we find the Marders sent on a case by Attorney General Robert Kennedy who is concerned about risks to his brother, the President, as well as to the security of the United States. Tapper fills in the color of this time with a prominent place for Frank Sinatra in the story, and the vivid ways in which he describes the lure of Hollywood. Tapper builds tension in this story that will appeal to readers who enjoy a good mystery and thriller, especially those who enjoyed our introduction to the Marders in <i>The Hellfire Club</i>.</p>	
<u>The Devil May Dance</u>	Tapper, Jake	****	<u>9/8/21</u>		
<u>Filthy Animals</u>	Taylor, Brandon	****	<u>11/6/21</u>	<p>Desire. The connected stories in the book titled, <u>Filthy Animals</u>, by Brandon Taylor overflow with desire. As the pages turn, we ache at the misalignment with societal expectations and the longing for connection. We are overheated in the hothouse of student life. We watch characters struggle to learn to love and feel their deep desire. We read Taylor's finely crafted sentences that are unflinching in examining the lives of the characters in these stories. The pain and love become palpable, and readers cannot look away.</p>	

Real Life

Taylor, Brandon

6/24/21

Wallace. As Brandon Taylor introduces readers of his debut novel titled, Real Life, to protagonist Wallace, we begin to feel a constant throb of pain along with this complex character as he navigates the world. We observe his anxiety as he leaves small town Alabama and secures a place in a science lab at a Midwestern university. We feel for all the ways in which he keeps others at a distance, as a response to past pain and to his struggle to fit in to his current situation. His father’s death seems to have the same impact on Wallace as the dead worms from a spoiled lab experiment. He desires intimacy and keeps others at a distance. Fans of literary fiction will appreciate Taylor’s finely written prose and will reflect thoughtfully about Wallace and his life.

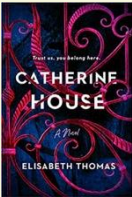


Catherine House

Thomas, Elisabeth

1/5/21

Intensity. Within the first few pages of Elisabeth Thomas’ debut novel titled, Catherine House, many readers will become uneasy. With every turned page, that feeling remains and its intensity increases. The setting is the closed campus of an elite but secretive university at which the students are confined to the grounds and expected to adhere to all the strict rules for three years of hard work after which they can move on to a prominent place in society. As we learn more about the admissions process, the students and teachers and the research underway, the creepiness of the place sets in and even the activities of regular campus life take on sinister undertones. Readers open to new



				<p>authors and to an intense plot are those most likely to enjoy this novel.</p>	
<p><u>Pappyland: A Story of Family, Fine Bourbon, and the Things That Last</u></p>	<p>Thompson, Wright</p>	<p>****</p>	<p><u>8/19/21</u></p>	<p>Homesick. I'm sorry to report that I had consumed the last two fingers of Pappy Van Winkle Family Reserve in my only bottle of this prized bourbon weeks before I read Wright Thompson's book titled, <u>Pappyland: A Story of Family, Fine Bourbon, and the Things That Last</u>. Thompson presents the story of Julian Van Winkle III, the third-generation head of the family's bourbon business. Like Julian, I found myself homesick for the taste I tried hard to remember of this special drink. What Julian did about it was to try his very best to replicate the taste as he remembered it from the produce distilled during his grandfather's time. You don't have to be a bourbon lover to enjoy this book, because thanks to Thompson's fine writing, the incorporation of himself in the story, and his relationship with Julian, this book speaks to any reader about home and family and that sweet taste that we want to endure.</p>	
<p><u>Pickard County Atlas</u></p>	<p>Thornton, Chris Harding</p>	<p>****</p>	<p><u>5/14/21</u></p>	<p>Pam. The action in Chris Harding Thornton's debut novel titled, <u>Pickard County Atlas</u>, takes places over the course of six days in 1978 in Nebraska. We meet an intriguing cast of characters, the most compelling of which for me was Pam, who struggles with the constraints of being a spouse and a mother and wants to escape. There's intensity to the plot, specificity in the setting, and complexity in the characters. I was thoroughly entertained by Thornton's finely written prose.</p>	

The Last Great Road Bum

Tobar, Héctor

7/17/21

Joe. Not your average Joe is the protagonist of Héctor Tobar's novel titled, The Last Great Road Bum, While structured as a novel, this story of based on a real person, Joe Sanderson, who grew up in Urbana, Illinois and spent his life roaming the earth. Sanderson's family entrusted Tobar with Joe's letters and writings, and from that base, Tobar crafted an engaging story about a fascinating character who lived an extraordinary life.

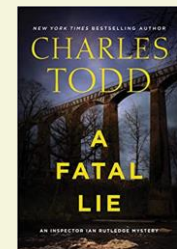


A Fatal Lie

Todd, Charles

4/22/21

Complexity. Crime novels often exclude many of the real-life dead ends that non-fiction detectives pursue in their cases. In the 23rd installment of the mystery series featuring Inspector Ian Rutledge by the mother-son team writing as Charles Todd, Rutledge meanders down lots of dead ends. Even longtime fans of the series may become frustrating that in this novel titled, A Fatal Lie, Rutledge seems to be more puzzled by the half-way point than he was at the beginning. I found the complexity to be just what I needed in spending more time with this intriguing and troubled protagonist. I found that my own "brain fog" from covid-19 fatigue was akin to Rutledge's loss of sleep as he drove around a northern Welsh county in circles for this 1921 case. As the Todds piled on more characters and led others to reappear, I felt Rutledge's fatigue and found myself trying extra hard to figure out the puzzle, which I found to turn the fatigue into excitement. Fans of crime fiction and this series may be challenged by this installment, but I



				found the detective and the case to be top notch and satisfying by the end.	
A Hanging at Dawn	Todd, Charles	****	2/4/21	<p>Simon. Fans of the Bess Crawford series by Charles Todd are those readers most likely to enjoy the backstory contained in a novella titled, A Hanging at Dawn. Set mostly in India when Bess was a child, we find out about how the Crawford family first met recurring character Simon Brandon. The events of this story are the pivotal ones that bound Simon to the family and knowing that context now explains much about what we already know happened after the events in India.</p>	
An Irish Hostage	Todd, Charles	****	8/5/21	<p>Wedding. The twelfth Bess Crawford mystery by the mother and son writing team called Charles Todd is a novel titled, An Irish Hostage. The First World War has ended, and Bess faces an uncertain future. She has agreed to attend the wedding of fellow nurse Eileen Flynn that's taking place in the small Irish village where Eileen grew up. There's peril in Ireland in this time after the Easter Rising in 1916 for the English, and for all who fought with the English in the war. The complex plot and ongoing suspense will delight all fans of this series, as well as any reader who enjoys mystery novels. It's no spoiler to report that Bess is no closer to making decisions about her future at the end of this novel than she was at the beginning. Will there be big changes for Bess in the next installment?</p>	

What Comes After

Tompkins, JoAnne

8/5/21

Healing. All the wounded characters in JoAnne Tompkins debut novel titled, What Comes After, learn that what must come after wounding is healing. Easier said than done when the wounds to parents involved the death of teenage sons. Some turning to life follows the loss of a loved one, so when a young pregnant girl arrives in the lives of the neighbors who both lost their sons, healing and connection begins. As each parent turns inside to confront the loss and to understand with clear eyes the boys who are dead, they are connected to help this pregnant stranger through her struggle. Readers get a glimpse of Quaker spirituality in this novel, and a delightful dog named Rufus who helps with all the healing as every good dog is prone to do.

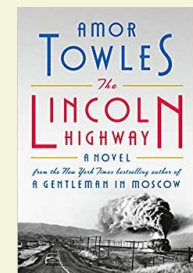


The Lincoln Highway

Towles, Amor

11/16/21

Journey. I was so ready to read a hero's journey, and Amor Towles met all my expectations in his novel titled, The Lincoln Highway. Eighteen-year-old protagonist Emmett Watson has been released from a Nebraska prison where he was serving time for involuntary manslaughter in 1954. His plan to abandon the family farm and head to California with his younger brother to find their estranged mother was amended when two escaped prisoners convince him to join them in New York on his journey to California. The novel captures about ten days with this fascinating cast of characters and allows Emmett to set the course of his life.



Deep Into the Dark

Tracy, P.J.

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.



Survivor Song

Tremblay, Paul

3/25/21

Scary. Until I received a covid-19 vaccination, I wasn't keen to read a scary book about a different virus, so I set aside Paul Tremblay's novel titled, Survivor Song. Feeling lighter in spirit following arrival at my place in queue for the shot, I reached for this novel and immersed in terror as appealing characters face a rabies virus that spreads quickly and leads to rapid loss of both mind and life. A pregnant woman has become infected and with her physician friend she's in a race for treatment and rapid delivery of her child before the worst happens. Fans of scary novels with fast plot pacing are those most likely to enjoy this novel, unless you've had enough virus in your life for now.



The Reckoning:
Our Nation's
Trauma and
Finding a Way to
Heal

Trump, Mary

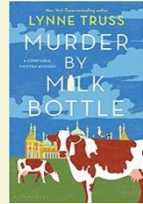
**


8/26/21

Ranting. I learned some things about the Trump family last year when I read Mary Trump's book titled, Too Much and Never Enough: How My Family Created the World's Most Dangerous Man. Mary Trump is back with a book titled, The Reckoning: Our Nation's Trauma and Finding a Way to Heal, and I finished reading it and felt I hadn't really learned anything, and that I spent too long listening to someone's rant. While she brought an insider's perspective to the first book, in the current one her voice has as

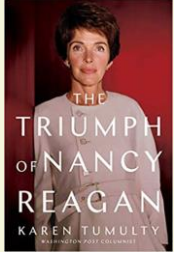
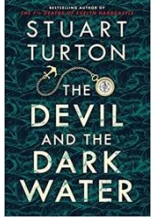
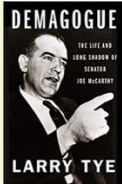


much expertise as one can hear from any stool in the neighborhood bar. She diagnoses the state of America as being in trauma, and that may be true, but I couldn't see what evidence she provides to support that diagnosis. I think of trauma as an individual thing, not societal, so I was curious to hear what she had to say. I've heard. Next.

<u>Murder by Milk Bottle</u>	Truss, Lynne	*****	<u>3/9/21</u>	<p>Spree. The third installment of Lynne Truss' series featuring Constable Twitten is titled, <u>Murder by Milk Bottle</u>. Dead bodies are piling up in Brighton and Twitten and police station charwoman Mrs. Groynes are right in the middle of the madness of the summer of 1957. Truss keeps her wit sharp throughout this novel as we follow the quirky cast of characters through an engaging plot. Not quite a spoiler, but I almost choked while laughing at the transfer among characters of a complete list that identified each murder victim of a killing spree. Let's tie all the pieces together, shall we?</p> 
--	--------------	-------	-------------------------------	---

<u>Heathcliff Redux: And Other Stories</u>	Tuck, Lily	*****	<u>10/8/21</u>	<p>Insight. The stories in Lily Tuck's collection titled, <u>Heathcliff Redux: And Other Stories</u>, reveal this fine writer's insight into human nature and behavior. Tuck finds ways to jar us with these stories, often using just a few sentences to break open her characters for our examination. We find a cleareyed way of looking at ourselves in these stories, and not blinking at what we read. What we begin to feel might be a digression becomes the path to understanding. Fans of finely written literary fiction are those</p> 
--	------------	-------	--------------------------------	--

readers most likely to appreciate this collection.

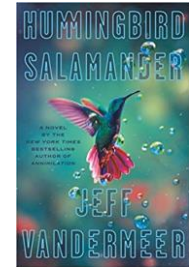
<u>The Triumph of Nancy Reagan</u>	Tumulty, Karen	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
<u>The Devil and the Dark Water</u>	Turton, Stuart	*****	<u>2/13/21</u>	<p>Pipps. Fans of historical crime fiction are those readers most likely to enjoy Stuart Turton's novel titled, <u>The Devil and the Dark Water</u>. The action takes place in 1634, mostly on a ship where we can observe the skills of "the world's greatest detective," Sammy Pipp, who still deduces with skill while imprisoned onboard. Strange symbols appear that spook the superstitious crew, and the stories about a devil named Old Tom cause many to believe that the devil is at work on this perilous journey from Batavia to Amsterdam with secretive cargo in the hold. Turton prompts us to consider lots of suspects for the crimes in the story, and by the time all the pieces come together, most readers will feel satisfaction that the journey is finally over.</p>	
<u>Demagogue: The Life and Long Shadow of Senator Joe McCarthy</u>	Tye, Larry	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	

Hummingbird Salamander

VanderMeer, Jeff

6/19/21

Clues. Jane Smith, protagonist of Jeff VanderMeer's novel titled, Hummingbird Salamander, finds herself and her family in peril after she's enticed by clues left for her by a dead ecoterrorist. This is not a spoiler, but the fact that the novel ends with a question was the perfect conclusion to a story in which Jane and us become absorbed in all the large and small questions about ourselves, each other, and our world. With this book, VanderMeer verges into writing a mystery novel, while not relenting in the ways in which he explores big questions with a unique voice.



We Run the Tides

Vida, Vendela

3/18/21

Neighborhood. In some ways, the neighborhood of Sea Cliff, a San Francisco neighborhood, is a character in Vendela Vida's novel titled, We Run the Tides. We meet teens Eulabee and Maria Fabiola and see their friendship and school life at an all-girls private school. There's silliness and drama. We find deception, cruelty, honesty and betrayal side by side while truth is elusive in their world of the 1980s. As with the changes that come with adolescence, what was familiar about Sea Cliff also changes. With great writing and efficiency, Vida presents all the confusion of growing up and being at the center of the only world that matters.

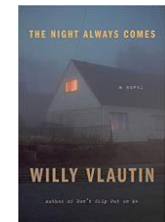


The Night Always Comes


Vlautin, Willy

7/10/21

Intensity. There's concentrated intensity in every scene of Willy Vlautin's novel titled, The Night Always Comes. Set in Portland over the course of a few days, we encounter all the things a person will do to make their dreams come true. Protagonist Lynette works multiple jobs trying to



scrape together a way to buy the home where she, her mother and her brother have been renting. Vlautin forces readers to not blink as we observe the lives of people trying their best to stay above water. We feel Lynette's hunger and anger and cannot look away as we watch mother and daughter come to terms with each other and with the next phase of their lives. The story is riveting, the characters complex, and the intensity captures the struggle of those on the margins to achieve the American dream.

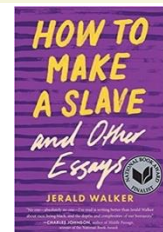
The Appointment	Volckmer, Katharina	****	4/22/21	<p>Identity. Katharina Volckmer structures her debut novel titled, The Appointment, as a monologue by a female narrator during a medical appointment with Dr. Seligman. We are entertained and shocked as we listen to her struggle to become herself. I found myself laughing, then becoming a bit unmoored. I felt hopeful then stunningly pessimistic. As the monologue progressed, I felt the narrator's unburdening, and also felt that I was picking up some of that burden and taking it on myself. While Dr. Seligman was toiling away, I wondered whether only readers were left listening. Readers looking for a quirky and inventive short novel should consider reading this one.</p>	
---------------------------------	---------------------	------	-------------------------	--	--

[How to Make a Slave](#)

Walker, Jerald

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.

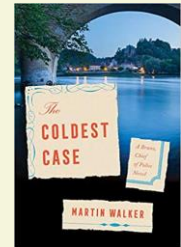


[The Coldest Case](#)

Walker, Martin

[9/23/21](#)

Change. Life in the Périgord can seem settled in keeping things the same until everything changes at once. In the sixteenth installment of the Bruno Chief of Police series by Martin Walker, a novel titled, [The Coldest Case](#), Bruno's life overflows with all that needs be done. When he sees how technology has evolved in reconstructing facial features from ancient skulls, he wonders if it could be used on a skull from a three decades-old unsolved case. Meanwhile, his dog has sired puppies for the first time, and a scientist doesn't eat meat, so Bruno prepares a vegan feast for her and his friends. Climate change impacts the region, and after the fire threat becomes dire, Bruno and others have to use all their wits to protect the community and its treasures. As always, the writing in this series is finely done, the stories and characters are engaging, and the eating and drinking will give readers an appetite for a special meal of one's own.

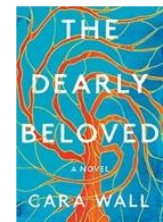


[The Dearly Beloved](#)

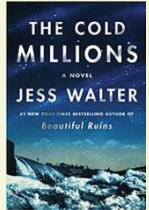
Wall, Cara


[1/5/21](#)

Quartet. The debut novel by Cara Wall titled, [The Dearly Beloved](#), sings in celebration of friendship, marriage, faith and understanding. Four finely drawn complementary characters unite at a Presbyterian Church in New York City where Charles and James have been selected to serve in a joint ministry to heal the community following a poor choice in appointing the previous pastor. Faith led Charles to reject a privileged academic future at Harvard, and love led him to marry Lily, an atheist and free spirit.




James grew up poor in Chicago, promotes church activism, and married Nan, the daughter of a southern minister. The harmony of this quartet in New York City amid setbacks and challenges and downright pain and suffering rings true for any reader who has lived. These are great and memorable characters and the novel's prose will fall easily on the ears of all readers, but especially fans of finely written literary fiction.

<u>The Cold Millions</u>	Walter, Jess	*****	<u>3/18/21</u>	<p>Union. I didn't know a thing about the free speech riots in Spokane, Washington in 1909 until I read Jess Walter's novel titled, <u>The Cold Millions</u>. The Industrial Workers of the World are trying to get local miners to form a union, and they are met with violence as they agitate for change. Brothers Gregory (Gig) and Ryan Dolan are caught up in the conflict. Real historical characters Spokane Police Chief John Sullivan plays a part, as does labor organizer Helen Gurley Flynn. Walter's prose is finely written, all the characters complex and interesting, and the parallels to our contemporary time are unavoidable. The cold millions of people struggling for a living wage and safe working conditions in Spokane in the last century appear in an updated form in our own cities and towns.</p>	
--------------------------	--------------	-------	----------------	---	---

<u>Imposter Syndrome</u>	Wang, Kathy	*****	<u>9/16/21</u>	<p>Agent. What's not to like about a spy novel set in Silicon Valley? I was thoroughly entertained by Kathy Wang's novel titled, <u>Imposter Syndrome</u>, in which protagonist Julia Lerner is a Russian agent who has become the COO of a major company. As her Russian handlers</p>	
--------------------------	-------------	-------	----------------	---	---

increase pressure on providing the information Moscow wants, Julia becomes conflicted. When a low-level employee detects Julia's activity, the plot thickens. Fans of espionage novels are those readers most likely to enjoy this contemporary story.

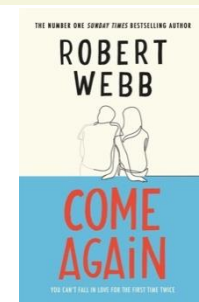
<u>Memorial</u>	Washington, Bryan	****	<u>3/18/21</u>	<p>Discovery. Love offers each of us the opportunity to learn about ourselves and to connect to others in ways that strengthen one another. In his novel titled, <u>Memorial</u>, Bryan Washington pulls readers into the love between Benson and Mike who live together in Houston. Just after Mike's mother, Mitsuko, lands in Texas for a visit, Mike departs to spend time in Osaka with his estranged father who is dying. Neither Benson nor Mitsuko anticipated living with each other, and Washington shows how some relationships can be built with strength quickly. The changes faced by these characters transform them profoundly and rapidly, and thanks to Washington's fine writing, we see ourselves in their faces that may seem at first quite unlike us.</p>	
---------------------------------	-------------------	------	--------------------------------	---	---

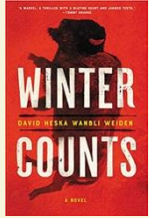
[Come Again](#)


Webb, Robert

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.



<u>Winter Counts</u>	Weiden, David Heska Wanbli	*****	<u>3/9/21</u>	<p>Identity. David Heska Wanbli Weiden's debut crime novel is titled, <u>Winter Counts</u>. Set on the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota, the novel overflows with interesting and complex characters facing contemporary challenges. Drug cartels are making inroads in the area to the peril of the community. Protagonist Virgil Wounded Horse has struggled with life and his identity, often called half-breed. He is guardian for his nephew, a high school student facing similar challenges of identity. Weiden writes with great skill and insight into the life of this community while presenting all the key elements of a thrilling crime plot.</p>	
--------------------------------------	----------------------------	-------	-------------------------------	--	---

<u>Project Hail Mary</u>	Weir, Andy	*****	<u>9/16/21</u>	<p>Sacrifice. You don't have to be a science or space nerd to love Andy Weir's novel titled, <u>Project Hail Mary</u>, because the thrilling plot and interesting characters make for an enjoyable story. Nerds will be delighted by the whole premise of a junior high science teacher from one planet teaming up with an engineering maven from another planet to save life on both their planets. Protagonist Ryland Grace has been selected for a sacrificial mission to travel to space to solve a problem that has begun to cause calamity on Earth. Weir makes it easy for all readers to enjoy the science, appreciate the peril at hand, and leads us to care about what will happen. This is a story of sacrifice by one person to serve the common good, a great lesson for our time and any time, and one hell of a good story.</p>	
--	------------	-------	--------------------------------	--	--

<u>Where Law Ends: Inside the Mueller Investigation</u>	Weissmann, Andrew	*****	<u>1/5/21</u>	<p>Choices. The world is unlikely to see an inside story from Bob Mueller about his time served as special counsel of the investigation into Russian interference into the 2016 presidential election in the United States so to find out more about this subject we have to look to someone else. Prosecutor Andrew Weissmann performed a key role in that investigation, and has written a detailed book titled, <u>Where Law Ends: Inside the Mueller Investigation</u>, about his perspective on what happened. Weissmann describes the choices and decisions made by Mueller and others throughout the investigation and the consequences of those choices. He also proposes ways to reform the approach used for future special investigations by amending the current process to ensure greater independence and transparency. Readers interested in public policy are those most likely to enjoy this informative book.</p>	
<u>Tomorrow, the World: The Birth of U.S. Global Supremacy</u>	Wertheim, Stephen	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
<u>Harlem Shuffle</u>	Whitehead, Colson	*****	<u>10/8/21</u>	<p>Heist. Some fiction writers return to places, characters, or time periods they've presented in earlier works. Colson Whitehead starts fresh with time, place, and character as if there is no connection to his earlier novels. The backdrop for his novel titled, <u>Harlem Shuffle</u>, is Harlem in</p>	

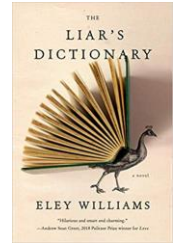
			the 1960s. The protagonist, Ray Carney, sells furniture, which Whitehead describes with glee, and he fences stolen goods on the side. The plot involves a heist, and we learn about power in the community, and tension in families as the line between right and wrong meanders. Whitehead's prose soars in this novel, and his love for Harlem infuses every page. I thoroughly enjoyed this novel and can't wait to see when and where Whitehead takes readers next.	
--	--	--	---	--

The Liar's Dictionary

Williams, Eley

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.



<u>Harrow</u>	Williams, Joy	****	<u>12/18/21</u>	<p>Guide. A cataclysm has happened before the start of Joy Williams novel titled, <u>Harrow</u>, and our guide to what comes next is a teenaged protagonist named Khristen. It's been two decades since readers have seen a novel from Williams, and there's experimentation and freshness in this work that will reward her patient fans. Khristen arrives at a lakeside resort and finds the lake has turned black and the area populated with a cast of strange people who had been eco-warriors. I delighted at every word I had to look up as I read this novel, and found my eyes opened to the natural world and decay in new ways. Williams drags us to notice dying and demands us to pay attention and do something.</p>	
---------------	---------------	------	-----------------	---	--

The Watergate Girl: My Fight for Truth and Justice Against a Criminal President

Wine-Banks, Jill

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2021.

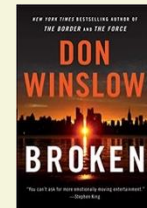


Broken

Winslow, Don

11/6/21

Range. Don Winslow displays the virtuosity of his writing range in his book titled, Broken, six short novels written as a homage. In a story dedicated to Raymond Chandler, we feel the style of that master in Winslow's dialogue and prose. It's easy to visualize Steve McQueen in the story dedicated to him. I closed my eyes and felt it was really Elmore Leonard writing the story dedicated to that genius. Fans of crime fiction will enjoy each of the stories in this collection for Winslow's skill and as homage to those to whom the stories are dedicated.



Landslide: The Final Days of the Trump Presidency

Wolff, Michael

8/19/21

Repetition. I was hesitant to read Michael Wolff's third book about the Trump presidency titled, Landslide: The Final Days of the Trump Presidency. The two earlier books just seemed to dish dirt, and I didn't want to waste time spent in the muck. In a weak moment, I picked up this third offering, and I'm glad I did. Thanks to his many sources, Wolff helps us understand what happened during the time from the presidential election on November 3, 2020, and the peaceful transition of power on January 20, 2021. Thanks to this book, I finally understood the core of the Trump schtick: repeat something continuously and sooner or later a lot of people will believe that it is



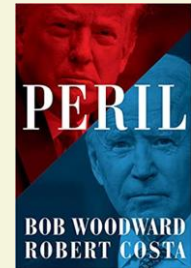
true. While there's still plenty of dirt dishing in this book, there's also insight into how close we came to a crisis because of the unrelenting repetition of lies and the pressure to do what Trump wanted done.

Transcripts. The rocky transition of power from President Trump to President Biden could have proceeded in ways even worse than what happened. That's one conclusion I drew after reading the book titled, Peril, by *Washington Post* reporters Bob Woodward and Robert Costa. The authors recorded interviews with more than two hundred people, received documents, and produced over six thousand pages of transcripts for distillation to readers without attribution of who said what. We know that neither Trump nor Biden were interviewed for this book. Readers can safely assume that the reason many individuals wanted to talk to Woodward and Costa was to put themselves in the best light possible. With that context, any reader interested in the recent turmoil in United States politics can find even more cause for alarm about recent history after reading this book. Personally, I'd love to read the transcripts, especially after a subject has relaxed with food and drink at the homes of the authors. Instead, we rely on the reporters to tell us an abbreviated and compelling story.

Peril

Woodward, Bob and
Robert Costa

10/15/21

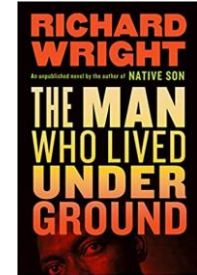


The Man Who Lived Underground

Wright, Richard

8/26/21

Mirror. Readers have the chance to appreciate a previously unpublished novel by the late Richard Wright titled, The Man Who Lived Underground. Written in the 1940s, and rejected for publication, this novel offers a mirror of that time with our own. A Black man has been forced violently to confess to a crime he didn't commit. He flees from custody into the sewers where he finds and gathers treasures. We feel the confusion of this protagonist and his struggle with life and injustice. Wright draws us into his plight and relates the story with such clarity that our anger builds as the story progresses. Then there's residual anger about the forces that restricted publication of this novel when it was written. Finally, there are all the feelings about what has and has not changed in the United States from the 1940s to the present. Read this reminder of Wright's prodigious talent for his own time and ours.

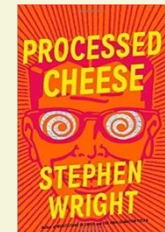


Processed Cheese

Wright, Stephen

1/16/21

Excess. Stephen Wright excoriates the self-absorbed vulgarity of modern life in his satiric novel titled, Processed Cheese. An odd and narcissistic cast of characters with zany names looks for satisfaction in consumerism, violence, sex and an excess of personal degradations. Parody and satire can be entertaining or overbearing, and readers can find both in this novel. The pace of the plot can be exhausting, especially following the rapid opening sequence that sets up the premise of the novel: when a bag of money falls out of the sky when what you need is cash, what



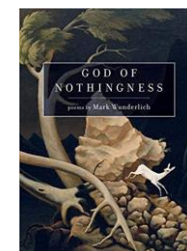
				would you do? The excesses of this novel tired me out, but I appreciated how perfectly Wright captures our cultural obsessions. These characters do not provide the models for human behavior, but they are exactly who we are more often than we would care to admit.	
--	--	--	--	--	--

God of Nothingness

Wunderlich, Mark

4/22/21

Impressions. During the first half of Poetry Month, I read two or three of Mark Wunderlich's thirty-two poems in a collection named after one of them, God of Nothingness. So much of reading poetry can be absorbing impressions. I found myself observing the reality of loss. I came to feel resilience and hope. I found humor. I followed connections from past to present to whatever is ahead. I watched the ways in which resilience forms, often following despair. At one line, I felt solitude, and at another line, I celebrated survival. Fans of poetry will find a lot to enjoy in this collection.



<u>The Bass Rock</u>	Wyld, Evie	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2021.	
----------------------	------------	--------	--	----------------------	--

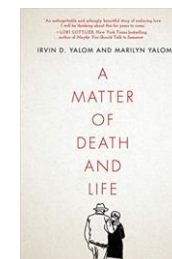


A Matter of Death and Life


Yalom, Irvin D. and Marilyn Yalom

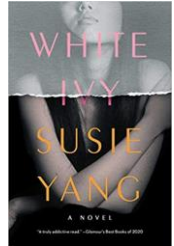
6/24/21

Legacy. Few couples, upon hearing that one of them has terminal illness, will spend their final months writing a book together. Psychiatrist and author Irvin Yalom and feminist author Marilyn Yalom chose that unusual path for their book titled, A Matter of Death and Life, and all readers are beneficiaries of this legacy.





Marilyn explores and shares how she tries to pursue what she considers a good death for her, and Irvin explores and shares how he focuses on what it will take to live on without his spouse and companion of many decades. On one level this is a love story, on another level it is a way for readers to see models for living out meaningful lives. We will each face death, for ourselves and for our loved ones. At such times, we need consolation, something this book can help us find.

<u>The Secret Talker</u>	Yan, Geling	****	<u>7/17/21</u>	<p>Communication. Should we remain silent, or should we speak out? In her novel titled, <u>The Secret Talker</u>, Geling Yan explores the choices we have in communication. Chinese-born protagonist Hongmei and her American husband, Glen, live in California, and their relationship has become disjointed, falling to the level of leaving Post-It notes for each other instead of talking directly. After Hongmei receives an email from an unknown sender, she chooses to reply. The consequences of the reply provide much of the tension throughout this finely written novel.</p>	
--	-------------	------	--------------------------------	---	---

<u>White Ivy</u>	Yang, Susie	****	<u>4/22/21</u>	<p>Character. The ingredients of Susie Yang's debut novel titled, <u>White Ivy</u>, combine to offer readers a tasty reading experience. We find a mix of class, race, culture, expectations, thievery, and desire. Protagonist Ivy is trained as a thief by her Chinese grandmother, fails to meet her immigrant parents' expectations, and finds herself in a relationship with "that" boy, Gideon, desired by many in the</p>	
----------------------------------	-------------	------	--------------------------------	---	---

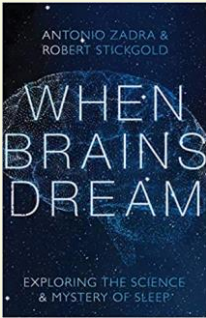
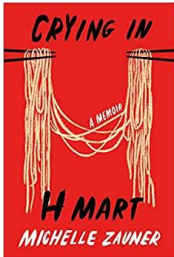
mainstream culture. We find love, deception, yearning, privilege, and insights into family. We keep trying to figure out Ivy and see what she really wants out of life. We gawk at Ivy's obsession and struggle to watch her separate shallowness from depth and to see the difference between wanting and having. This character study finally clicks when we realize it is always all about Ivy.

<u>One Billion Americans: The Case for Thinking Bigger</u>	Yglesias, Matthew	*****	<u>1/16/21</u>	<p>Provocative. Go big or go home. In his book titled, <u>One Billion Americans: The Case for Thinking Bigger</u>, Matthew Yglesias offers a provocative proposal. He believes the best future for the United States will be to increase our population to a billion people. If you think we're "full" now, Yglesias has other ideas for you to consider. He tackles a variety of objections and provides an array of policy proposals that would lead to a thriving society in which a billion Americans would live. Whether you're skeptical or curious, I recommend giving his ideas some thought.</p>	
--	-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	--	---

<u>Nightbitch</u>	Yoder, Rachel	*****	<u>9/8/21</u>	<p>Motherhood. Rachel Yoder's debut novel titled, <u>Nightbitch</u>, will appeal in a special way to any parent whose role led to some temporary or permanent loss of one's mind. A nameless protagonist places her career as an artist on hold to stay at home with her newborn son, a practical arrangement since her husband's income exceeds hers. While the husband travels for work every week, the mother compares herself unfavorably to those other moms who seem to have it all together. With a sharp satire at modern parenting, Yoder</p>	
-----------------------------------	---------------	-------	-------------------------------	---	---

lets the mother become more animal than human and that's just what was needed to break out of languish. By the time we are accustomed to what seems like a fantasy life, Yoder arranges performance art which restores the mother to her self-identity as an artist. Laugh and howl with this novel and the transformations it offers for our insight and entertainment.

<u>The Inugami Curse</u>	Yokomiso, Seishi	****	<u>6/24/21</u>	<p>Classic. Fans of murder mysteries are those readers most likely to enjoy a classic closed room mystery by Seishi Yokomiso titled, <u>The Inugami Curse</u>. Detective Kosuke Kindaichi unravels the mystery with great skill as he reveals secrets of the Inugami family and uncovers hidden identities. If you love red herrings and blind alleys, there are plenty in this finely written novel. The setting of the novel is the 1940s, and Yokomiso's work has finally been translated into English so that more mystery fans can appreciate the talent of a master of this genre.</p> 
<u>Run Me to Earth</u>	Yoon, Paul	****	<u>9/16/21</u>	<p>Survival. Paul Yoon's finely written novel titled, <u>Run Me to Earth</u>, takes us to Laos in the 1960s when everyday life involved survival from a barrage of bombs that became routine. Through orphans Alisak, Prany and Noi, we learn what it takes to live in this horrible situation. We find hope on these pages as the characters experience cruelty and beauty. The contrast of the best and worst of human nature keeps our intense focus as we join the journey of these characters.</p> 

<u>When Brains Dream: Exploring the Science and Mystery of Sleep</u>	Zadra, Antonio and Robert Stickgold	****	<u>6/8/21</u>	<p>Answers. General readers looking for a comprehensive examination about sleep and dreaming will find out what science knows today about this topic by reading a book by Antonio Zadra and Robert Stickgold titled, <u>When Brains Dream: Exploring the Science and Mystery of Sleep</u>. Whatever questions you're likely to have about what goes on while we sleep, you're likely to find answers in this interesting book. I didn't snooze once while I was reading it, but I think while I slept overnight, my brain processed what I read.</p>	
<u>Crying in H Mart</u>	Zauner, Michelle	****	<u>8/19/21</u>	<p>Tribute. Musician Michelle Zauner's memoir titled, <u>Crying in H Mart</u>, offers tribute to her late mother as she explores their relationship and relates the journey through her mother's fatal illness. Readers dealing with grief of any sort will find this book analogous to one's own story. Readers who have ever been told they are not enough of something will recognize Zauner's struggle of being perceived as not Korean enough. All readers will find a heartfelt story that speaks to the special relationship between a mother and a daughter.</p>	

Each page contains links to allow you to purchase these or other items directly from amazon.com. Small payments from amazon.com when you purchase items through these links will be donated to charity.

Key to Ratings:

*****	I love it
****	I like it
***	It's OK
**	I don't like it
*	I hate it