

books&authors
SPECIAL ISSUE

High Country News

For people who care about the West

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OLD WESTS, AND NEW

Karen Piper | Rebecca Clarren | Amy Irvine
Profiles, interviews, reviews, new books

High Country News

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Old Wests, and New

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“Some are born to sweet delight, some are born to endless night.”
Analog collage by Michael Tunk.

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Editor's note

The persistence of place

Every year, *High Country News* takes a break from covering current events to look at the West through the eyes of its literary denizens. Most of the writing in this year's "Books and Authors" issue hits themes familiar to every Westerner, echoing the conflicts common to our million-square-mile region. These authors find a sense of inspiration in the land, even when that land is damaged and overused. Karen Piper's memoir, *A Girl's Guide to Missiles*, recalls her childhood on a secretive Cold War outpost – the China Lake Missile Range in California's Mojave Desert – where her parents designed weapons for the U.S. military. Returning as an adult, she seeks to make sense of her memories, both mundane and surreal. But the desert's unchanging beauty eclipses fear and dread: "The incongruousness of the place made me want to laugh out loud, to become delirious. ... I started a skip-run like my father's into the canyon and felt that desert elation seep inside me, the living wilderness embracing me. The guide faded into the distance. The ordnance was forgotten."

In *Kickdown*, the fictional story of two sisters fighting to hold onto their family's Colorado ranch after their father dies, former *HCN* Associate Editor Rebecca Clarren depicts the natural gas industry's impacts on a small Western town and its residents. Rebecca's characters are recognizable individuals – an emotionally wounded Iraq War vet, a journalist who has lost her confidence, a daughter who left a promising medical career to "save" the ranch. They want to make peace with this

scarred landscape, even as they recognize that no landscape, and no lifestyle, lasts forever.

Utah writer Amy Irvine also seeks to make peace with change. In *Desert Cabal: A New Season in the Wilderness*, she revisits the ideas of Edward Abbey, that legendary wilderness advocate and literary curmudgeon. Musing at his unmarked desert grave, she writes, "You, Mr. Abbey, may have developed whole fleets – generations' worth – of desert defenders, but now they're out there en masse, bumping into one another on the very ground on which you taught them to go lightly and alone. They are as much the problem as they are the solution, and it's hard to know how we don't divvy that down the middle, into us and them, right and wrong."

Other writers in this issue reimagine our relationships to each other, and to the land. Diné poet Tacey Atsitty looks to fill "part of that void we often feel as human beings." Tommy Orange, a Cheyenne and Arapaho novelist, examines what it means to be an urban Indian. Ben Goldfarb introduces us to Susan Leopold Freeman, a granddaughter of iconic conservationist Aldo Leopold who's resurrecting a dying creek in Washington.

Irvine puts it best: "Despite what seems like increasingly dark times for the planet, these wild places persist. Places that exfoliate our neuroses. That refuse to coddle our compulsions. That remind us, in these times of profound greed, what we really need." We hope you'll find something you need in this issue of *HCN* as well. —Jodi Peterson, contributing editor

Contributors

Jack Andritsch Jack Andritsch was raised in Indiana, where his fondness for open spaces lured him to the fields and forests. He studied environmental engineering at Clemson University and now lives with his dog, Mesa, in Wyoming.



Graham Lee Brewer is a contributing editor for tribal affairs at *High Country News*. A member of the Cherokee Nation, he lives in Norman, Oklahoma.



Rebecca Clarren has been writing about the rural West for 20 years in *High Country News*, *The Nation*, *Mother Jones* and *Salon.com*. *Kickdown*, her first novel, was shortlisted for the PEN/Bellwether Prize for Socially Engaged Fiction. She lives in Portland, Oregon.



Michael Engelhard is the author of *Ice Bear: The Cultural History of an Arctic Icon* and of *American Wild: Explorations from the Grand Canyon to the Arctic Ocean*. An anthropologist and wilderness guide, he also dabbles in photography.



Ben Goldfarb lives in Spokane, Washington. A frequent contributor to *High Country News*, he is the author of *Eager: The Surprising, Secret Life of Beavers and Why They Matter* (Chelsea Green Publishing, 2018).



Heather Hansman lives in Seattle, where she writes about water and the West. *Downriver*, her first book, will be out in April. Follow her @hhansman



Amy Irvine is a sixth-generation Utahn and longtime public lands activist. Her memoir, *Trespass: Living at the Edge of the Promised Land*, received the Orion Book Award, among others. Irvine lives and writes off the grid in southwest Colorado.



Jonathan Thompson is a contributing editor at *High Country News* and the author of *River of Lost Souls: The Science, Politics and Greed Behind the Gold King Mine Disaster*.



Leeanna Torres has deep roots in New Mexico. Her essays have appeared in *Blue Mesa Review*, *Tupelo Press Quarterly*, and more recently in *Minding Nature*, a publication of the Center for Humans and Nature).



Jenny Shank's novel, *The Ringer*, won the High Plains Book Award. Her writing has appeared in *The Atlantic*, *The Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Guardian* and *McSweeney's*. She is on the faculty of the Mile High MFA at Regis University in Denver.



Mary Slosson is a writer based in Portland, Oregon. She was formerly a correspondent for the newswire Reuters covering the American West, and has also served as editor of the *Telluride Daily Planet* in Telluride, Colorado. She is working on her debut novel.



Leath Tonino is a freelance writer whose journalism, fiction and poetry have appeared in *Orion*, *Outside*, *The Sun*, *Utne Reader*, and elsewhere. A collection of his essays, *The Animal One Thousand Miles Long*, was published in September 2018.

FROM OUR WEBSITE: HCN.ORG

Trending

Utah supports monument cut

In 2017, following heavy lobbying by the uranium mining industry and a widely criticized Interior Department review, President Donald Trump issued executive orders shrinking Bears Ears National Monument by about 85 percent, and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument by almost 50 percent. Opponents of the unprecedented orders, including tribal governments, conservation nonprofits and others, sued, citing the land's cultural, scientific and recreational value. Now, Utah intends to join the suit in support of Trump's efforts, saying the original boundaries violate state interests and devalue state lands. MAYA L. KAPOOR

You say

JOSHUA MUNSON: "I believe it is the sovereign right of tribes, not the state of Utah!"

TIM MORRIS: "Utah says it has 'sovereign interests' in how millions of acres of public land are managed. 'Yes, they indeed do. Issue becomes: Do your state's sovereign interests trump all the other interests at play? In spite of what the so-called 'strict Constitutionalists' might say, the answer is not always yes."

MAC JONES: "Hey. You gave up your rights to the federal government in Jan. 4, 1896, to become the 45th state."

Read more online: hcn.ws/utah-monuments and [Facebook.com/highcountrynews](https://facebook.com/highcountrynews)

Photos



"B," a former plumber at the Tesla Gigafactory in Nevada, is among the workers with Tesla connections who live out of a vehicle. NINA RIGGIO

The downside of a job at Tesla

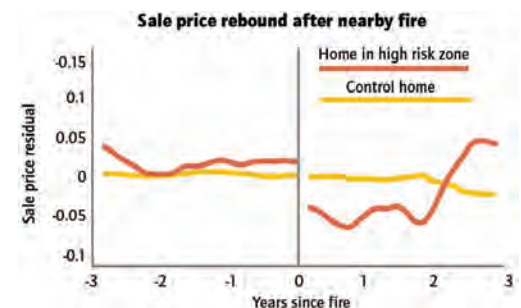
Tesla founder and CEO Elon Musk plans to employ as many as 20,000 workers at his new Gigafactory in Storey County, Nevada — five times the county's 2010 population. Though the county benefits from increased taxable sales — and the company gains from a \$1.25 billion tax incentive package — low-ranking Tesla employees are struggling to find housing. SEE MORE PHOTOS FROM NINA RIGGIO: hcn.ws/tech-homeless

“The bare facts remain that the (cost) of electricity ... is going down due to the use of renewables and the pricing of natural gas. You can politicize it all you want, but in the end economics is really what drives it.”

—Bill Patterson, Delta-Montrose Electric Association board president, explaining why his rural western Colorado utility wants to buy itself out of its contract with Tri-State Generation & Transmission, which is heavily invested in coal. JESSICA KUTZ MORE: hcn.ws/utility-renewables

Wildfires don't hurt hot real estate markets

A recent study found that real estate prices drop only in the immediate aftermath of a wildfire. The finding illuminates a troubling feedback loop: The West's most fire-prone areas are also some of its most desirable, meaning that more people want to live in them. That not only increases firefighting costs; since most wildfires are unintentionally sparked by people, population growth also increases the overall risk. PAIGE BLANKENBUEHLER MORE: hcn.ws/housing-wildfire



Homes in wildfire-prone areas see a drop in price following a fire, but quickly rebound and spike less than three years after the incident.

SHAWN J. MCCOY AND RANDALL P. WALSH



High
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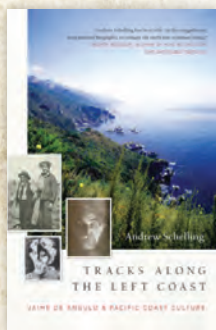
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A great West Coast culture hero

Andrew Schelling talks about the eccentric linguist Jaime de Angulo



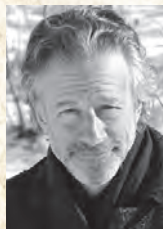
Tracks Along The Left Coast: Jaime de Angulo & Pacific Coast Culture
Andrew Schelling
336 pages,
softcover: \$16.95.
Counterpoint Press,
2018.

In the mid-1970s, a young poet and bioregionalist named Andrew Schelling proposed a thesis on the writings of Jaime de Angulo, an old bohemian and homesteader, for the M.A. program in English at UC Berkeley. Six professors rejected it, saying de Angulo didn't merit serious study. The department administrator suggested William Butler Yeats instead — "Everybody knows who he was." So Schelling quit without a degree, frustrated but still sure that de Angulo's work was worthwhile, convinced that it illuminated frequently overlooked aspects of California history.

It's ironic: De Angulo — who was born in Paris of Spanish descent around 1888, did some cowboying in Colorado, and eventually landed in the Bay Area on the eve of the 1906 earthquake

High Country News: Who was Jaime de Angulo? Or, given his eclectic background, what was he?

Andrew Schelling: For starters, he was a counterculture anarchist who built a homestead in Big Sur in 1914, when that jagged marvelous coast was days from the nearest stage post.



ALTHEA ABRUSCATO

He wrote some poems and some novels, studied medicine and psychology, but really he was a self-trained linguist, probably the finest recorder of Native California languages. He worked on almost 30 languages of Northern California and Mexico that had never been recorded. His greatest achievement was an oral presentation made in 1949 and 1950, shortly before his death, on Berkeley's KPFA radio: about 100 broadcasts that he called *Old Time Stories*. The tapes are available online, and they are one of the truly ungraspable works of American literature. Like Ezra Pound's *Cantos* or James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, they are compendiums of an entire world.

HCN: De Angulo has a kind of cult following in woodsy shacks around the West, but he's basically unknown by the mainstream. What's going on there?

AS: Part of it is that he died before he had any books in print, so he became more of a legendary figure, instead of a literary figure. Whereas with someone like Mary Austin or John Muir you could pick up a book, with de Angulo you needed to grab a seat by the campfire and just listen, either to him or to someone talking about him. He shows up on a few pages of one of Jack Kerouac's novels, he taught linguistics to Jack Spicer and Robert Duncan and influenced other poets of the San Francisco Renaissance, and he was friends with Robinson Jeffers, Carl Jung, D.H. Lawrence, Mabel Dodge Luhan, Langston Hughes, Ezra Pound. Gary Snyder called him a great West

— was earlier rebuffed by the same institution as well. A gifted linguist and ethnographer, he'd requested that UC Berkeley preserve the rare recordings of Native California songs that he had gathered in the field. He was rejected, too.

Last year, Schelling — now a translator of Sanskrit poetry and a teacher at Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado — released *Tracks Along the Left Coast: Jaime de Angulo and Pacific Coast Culture*, the book he had hoped to start four-plus decades ago. Less a neat-and-tidy biography than a thickety maze of tales both true and apocryphal, it situates de Angulo in a timeline that reaches back to the earliest Indigenous creation stories and forward to the literature of the present. *HCN* contributor Leath Tonino recently interviewed Schelling.

Coast culture hero.

His homesteading at Big Sur was a practical, on-the-ground experiment that balanced his years spent hanging around with healers, medicine people, shamans, whatever term you prefer. He lived without books, singing songs to the Steller's jays and bobcats, and supposedly pushed his cookstove off the cliff the day that he heard about the atomic bomb being dropped on Hiroshima — sort of like, *Whoa, we've got to take this whole technology thing all the way back to the beginning, rethink everything*. It was the spirit of Henry David Thoreau: What is the irreducible minimum for a human to live on? How can you live in the wilderness, hunt, garden, gather plants, and be independent of social pressures?

HCN: Is de Angulo important today? By looking back at his life, does he point us toward a certain future?

AS: There's that anarchist streak, which questions whether we need so much government, so many possessions, or if what we really need is a personalized relationship with the land. What I find most exciting, though, is that as you get into his writings and radio broadcasts, you start to see the beauties of an amazing bioregion — the Shasta Bioregion, Northern California — prior to development, and it gives you new eyes. *Oh, I get it, underneath this road there's an old Pomo village, and underneath this suburb is where material was gathered for arrowheads*. There's a different timescale here, and I think that for all the damage done to the ecologies and Indigenous cultures, some things have a way of coming back. The stuff that de Angulo was interested in is durable: the stories, the songs, the powers hidden deep in the woods, on the ridges. **BY LEATH TONINO**

Making space for conversation, culture and books

In Seattle, writers of color encourage more diverse voices

Jeff Cheatham is hard at work in a corner of The Station coffee shop in Beacon Hill, one of Seattle's most diverse neighborhoods, prepping for the third annual Seattle Urban Book Expo planned for August 2018. He's trying to lock down food trucks and a space for readings, but people keep stopping to say hi. A woman gives him a hug as she walks in. "I need to talk to you about lighting," he tells her.

When Cheatham first started the book fair, he had no idea that it would end up becoming so deeply stitched into the local fabric. But it's become a community event, pulling in a growing number of writers of color from the Seattle area and beyond, as well as volunteers, including the lighting expert. Cheatham still isn't used to people thinking he's a publishing guru; he just wanted to meet other writers and sell some books. "I didn't know I was going to add event planning to my résumé," he says, laughing. After self-publishing his first book — *The Family Jones and the Eggs of Rex*, which he wrote for his daughter, Josilyn, because he was dismayed by the lack of children's books with non-white characters — he was disappointed by the lack of community and support. He didn't know any other black authors in Seattle, which was recently ranked as one of the 10 least racially diverse cities in America.

So Cheatham contacted a black Canadian writer of urban fiction, Stacey Marie Robinson, whose skill at self-promotion he found impressive. She invited him to visit the Toronto Urban Book Expo, to see if he could make some connections there.

"In Toronto, I saw all these authors who looked just like me. I hadn't ever heard of a black and brown book fair in Seattle, so I decided to create one," he says. He took notes from Robinson and asked eight local authors to work with him. The nine of them set up tables in the Black Dot event space, and much to his surprise, hundreds of people flooded through the doors. "People were already asking about the second one at the first one," he says.

This year, he has 20 authors coming from as far away as Mississippi. They'll be joined by independent bookstore owners, members of advocacy groups such as "Brown Girls Write" and hundreds of casual attendees. "I'm all about creating

a family reunion vibe," Cheatham says. "When I first started, I felt like there was no one I could talk to, so I never want to deny anyone knowledge."

The local community that can supply that knowledge is growing. Around the corner, lawyer and advocate Edwin Lindo built a different kind of space for diverse books. In May, he opened Estelita's Library, named after his year-old daughter Estella and modeled on the literary salons his Nicaraguan father remembered. The tiny space is lined with books, from obscure tracts on hip-hop and the law to tomes on displacement and Octavia Butler's early science fiction. "It was an idea that I'd always dreamed of, a library of social justice-focused critical literature that you couldn't find other places," he says. "I wanted a community library and cultural space full of wine, beer, food and babies" — an open, inclusive space where books could spark conversations. When he rented the space and started assembling a collection of his own books and donated volumes, he wasn't sure how it would work or if he would be able to sustain it. But, like Cheatham, he says the reality has turned out even better than he imagined. He already has hundreds of members who pay a sliding yearly membership fee, and he's been pleasantly surprised by the crowd. "From black academics to working-class white folks to the *abuelita* around the corner, we have a whole range," he says. "There's an older conservative man who has become a member. I bet a lot of these books burn him, but we have a piano and he likes that."

In a way, this is why Lindo started the library — because a man who walks in to play the piano might pick up a book he would never have found otherwise and then start talking about it. "For me, the culture-building aspect was really important," he says. "The books are only as valuable as the community around them."

Estelita's is kept open by volunteers — Cheatham is one of them — and the book fair is still, largely, a one-man show. But both Lindo and Cheatham have hit on what feels like a need and a network, shown by the upwelling of interest amid a dearth of other options. They're working together

to encourage a diversity of literary voices and create a place for people to hear them.

That's why Cheatham is quietly resigned to being seen as an expert, even if he's not exactly comfortable with it. "The publishing industry is super white, and we just want to create our voice," Cheatham says. "We're here, and we're not monolithic. It's not just urban fiction, where it's thug meets gangster. We have children's books, we have non-fiction, we have LGBTQ literature, we have political books. I want to showcase all that."

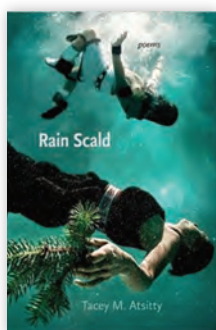
BY HEATHER HANSMAN



ILLUSTRATIONS BY JULIA LUBAS

Writing informed by place

A conversation with poet Tacey Atsitty



Rain Scald
Tacey M. Atsitty
88 pages,
softcover: \$18.95.
University of New
Mexico Press, 2018.



DOROTHY GRANDBOIS

Tacey Atsitty, an award-winning Diné poet, is *Tsénahabíłnii* (Sleep Rock People) and born for *Ta'neezahñii* (Tangle People). She was born in Cove, Arizona, grew up in Kirtland, New Mexico, earned undergraduate degrees from Utah's Brigham Young University and the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and eventually an MFA in creative writing from Cornell University.

Rain Scald, Atsitty's first book of poetry, was recently published by the University of New Mexico Press. "The land informs so much of *Rain Scald* — it's what holds the stories, it's what holds my ancestors, it's what holds everything," Atsitty said. She has been writing poetry since her early days, when she attended the Navajo Preparatory School in Farmington, New Mexico.

Influenced and encouraged at an early age by Diné poets like Luci Tapahonso and Laura Tohe, Atsitty shares her culture and experiences not only through her poetry, but also through her work as the coordinator of the Native American Village at This is the Place Heritage Park in Salt Lake City. She also helped organize the First Annual Navajo Film Festival, held in Farmington this past June.

HCN contributor Leeanna Torres recently visited with Atsitty. The following interview has been condensed and edited.

High Country News: How did your recent book, *Rain Scald*, come together?

Tacey Atsitty: Most of it came together out of a place of grief, during my time attending Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, following an epidemic of students committing suicide by jumping into the gorges that converge near the University. I found myself asking, "How can I help the students left behind, how can I respond to this community?" As a Westerner used to wide-open spaces, I also retreated to these gorges to offer me some solace; the gorges reminded me of the canyons of my childhood on the



ILLUSTRATION BY REBEKA RYVOLA

Navajo Nation. The center section of my book, especially "Gorge Dweller," evolved from that time.

HCN: How do you see poetry influencing readers today?

TA: There really is a kind of poetry resurgence in America today. In this digital age (with Facebook, Instagram, etc.), there is a deeper need to feel and reach at the emotions of the human experience. Poets record and translate those experiences we go through and can relate to. Even if (people) don't understand the whole poem, they can take a piece of it, saying, "Yes, I've felt that, too. ..." And so poetry is able to touch people in a deeper and different way than other forms of writing, including social media. Poetry takes time, it slows people down, and it can fill part of that void we often feel as human beings. ... For me, I feel I'm successful as a poet when a reader can pick up my work, and after reading, say, "Yes, I've felt that, too..."

HCN: What does it mean to be a "Native" writer in today's West?

TA: That brings to mind editor Heid Erdrich's recent comment in the special edition of *Poetry Magazine*, entitled "Native Poets." Erdrich argues that "there is no such thing as Native American poetry. We are poets who belong to Native Nations." I've never thought of myself as a Native poet in the West, but rather as a poet in the world. ...

Nonetheless, Native poets such as Simon Ortiz, Joy Harjo and Luci Tapahonso paved the way for poets like me, and also allowed poets of my generation the chance to write in different ways. I try and always stay true to my own voice. While I'm not fluent in Navajo, I can speak a little, and I read and write fluently. A lot of my colloquialisms are found in the local color of the Navajo Nation or surrounding areas, so my language and writing is informed by this.

HCN: What does it feel like to express yourself through English, rather than your people's Native language?

TA: This goes into a much larger discussion of history, and why it is that English



is my first language. My father, from the age of 8 to 18, was in what was called the Indian Placement Program, enacted by the LDS Church. During the school year, he would live with LDS families, and then he would go home during the summers. He said it felt like being “dipped” from language to language, because he grew up only speaking Navajo, then he’d go to the English-speaking family, then back into Navajo ... so he felt like he could never get a good grasp on either language. (Because of that) he raised us (Atsitty and her siblings) speaking only English, and, long-story short, I went to an Ivy League institution, I’ve lived abroad, I’ve traveled around the world ... and I’ve been able to do these things because of language. I am able to articulate, and to tell our stories, my stories, in a way that English-speaking people can understand. Do I lament the fact that I don’t fluently speak Navajo? Absolutely. ... (long pause)

HCN: *What invitation would you offer readers towards your work and message?*

TA: Just keep reading, keep an open mind, and start with poetry you can relate to. ... I know that my work can be difficult, but I was taught as a poet that the reader often has to do as much work reading as I’ve done in writing. I was talking with my dad just the other day, and he said something like, “Why is poetry so hard?!” and I said, “Dad, if poetry was easy, nobody would read it.”

Oftentimes, “accessible” is a dirty word in poetry circles; if work is too accessible, then it’s too transparent. However, I knew my audience for this book was initially going to be Native students, and yet I also want my work to be *accessible* to people who are *not* Navajo, who are not female, who are not who I am.

Our history in the West is so very complex, but if I were to offer any words, it would be to encourage *acknowledgement* of the land — this acknowledgment that everything we receive we receive from the land, from earth. And to be grateful.

BY LEEANNA TORRES

“On Receiving Revelation”

Man must be governed by an understanding of his natural surroundings. The earth is under the protection of something which at times becomes visible to the eye.

—Teton Sioux Medicine Man

*The pines are webbed heavy with winter,
In times of white over green, wise over enough —
Erase talc lines with a wet rag, a smeared flow
of voices. Know what is visible, what rise
comes from the lull of snow, what cusp
of uncertainty follows. Meander ice*

*trails wound in season like a drum’s lacing. Ice
in hand, smear these slats clear from winter
or all things old. Is it not enough to sing the cusp
closed? So empty with song, so resonant of an eye
fluttering at the push of flakes. All that rises
must someday slip. Somewhere beneath shells flow*

*this and many other pleas. Ask for the taut flow
of visibility, for more than the to get through ice,
to work through, to overcome all things ice, to rise
through horsetails and fans of cascade winters.
Turn to kneel at the gorge steeple, and wait for eyes
to wane with snow cut’s stratum, in deluge, in cusp.*

*What is visible to eye clasp, eye cusp
crusted with rime. In palms glazed seeds flow.
What grips the ground of unseen. Marble eye,
through whiteout, sees glass glimmer. Ice
sugar, quiver of bolts: both lightening and ray. Winter
in sand closing, fractured. In truth: fall, rise,*

*fall again into straps of gorges. Here, rise
among women, pose lines to curve the cusp,
pose a bottle of pills returned, pose a pile of winter
unleavened. Take them from me because flow*

*comes with the taking. Blessing of thaw and drip: ice
cackle no more to stiffen nor whip the eye.
An answer drifts in sky board; my eyes
glint in certainty at the snow line. As water rises,
pull out from plunge, chips of ice
chalk melt into an overflow of light. Cusp
in the falling: awake with cherubim. Flow
atop the pines. Look! Walls loll in sun’s winter:*

*in cycles of ice, in circles of the eye;
spring will winter, and God’s sorrow rises
to the cusps of his eyes: a swivel of fire flow.*

Excerpt From: Tacey M. Atsitty, *Rain Scald*.

The view from the hedges

Hometown: Bainbridge Island, Washington

Age: 50

Vocations: "I've sorted tomatoes, hacked up roadkill for a wildlife refuge. I've been a caregiver, a bus boy. I've telemarketed sunglasses. I've checked gas meters." He also mowed lawns and worked as a landscaper for many years.

Current lawnmower: Craftsman 19 horsepower with a 42" deck. "And a super-tight turning radius. ... It's boss!"

He says: "Poor people are always aware of other people's teeth. For six years I've been walking around with half a tooth in my head. It's something programmed into me: that dentistry is not something we waste our money on."

Claims to fame:

In the mid-'80s, Evison was the singer/screamer for March of Crimes, a Seattle punk band. Members included Stone Gossard, who later formed Pearl Jam, and Ben Shepherd, who would play bass in Soundgarden.

Evison's 2012 novel, *The Revised Fundamentals of Caregiving*, was adapted into the 2016 film *The Fundamentals of Caring*, starring Paul Rudd and Selena Gomez.

Midway through the book tour for his fifth novel, *Lawn Boy*, on a blustery April evening, California-born writer Jonathan Evison stops at the Tattered Cover in Denver. Seven people have braved a high-wind warning to come out. Evison wears his tour uniform: a black hat, Chuck Taylors and a plaid blazer with red, navy and yellow stripes. "This is the best tour jacket," he says. "It hides all stains: mustard, beer, coffee."

Although he looks road-wear, Evison treats the small gathering at the Colfax Avenue store exactly as he does the packed rooms that regularly greet him at indie bookstores throughout the West: He reads a little from his novel, answers questions and spills his guts. If you take the trouble to come see him, he'll give you everything he's got.

He talks about growing up poor surrounded by wealthier people. "My dad brought us up to Bainbridge Island and then left us there," he says. His mom raised five kids alone. Evison's older sister died in a car wreck, a loss that informs his third novel, *The Revised Fundamentals of Caregiving*. Evison discusses how he wrote eight books — three of which he literally buried in his backyard — before he published his first, *All About Lulu*, in 2008. He speaks quickly, flitting from one idea to the next. The focused concentration of writing, he says, helps him manage his bipolar disorder: "Without writing, I'd be an IV drug user or out yelling at parking meters."

EVISON'S NEW NOVEL, *Lawn Boy*, like many of his books, draws on his work experiences. Evison, who never went to college, laments that "there are no working-class people in the arts." Instead, after spending his teenage years in Seattle punk bands, he worked a variety of blue-collar jobs. One of his favorite gigs was as a landscaper on Bainbridge Island. Mowing, like writing, gave him focused activity that could "soothe my popcorn brain."

But he resented the way people treated him. "I was a skilled tradesperson, and wealthy people didn't remember my name. Old ladies tried to get me to take out the trash or wash a car. One had a 200-pound St. Bernard that left elephant-sized turds everywhere she wanted me to pick up."

Evison recreates this scene at a pivotal moment in *Lawn Boy*, when its narrator, 22-year-old Mike Muñoz, is ordered to collect dog droppings with a pa-

per bag in the rain. Although Mike has few resources — he's poor and lives with his mother and disabled brother — he quits and vows to search for something better.

Evison's writing voice is earnest, authentic, endearing and hilarious, and he's at his best in *Lawn Boy*. "Wasn't the American dream built on the idea of equal opportunity?" Muñoz asks. "So where was my opportunity? I wasn't asking for handouts. All I wanted was a job that provided a living wage and a little dignity."

Evison started writing *Lawn Boy* when a different novel he was under contract for faltered. "There was no heartbeat. I decided to throw it away, and I was terrified to tell anybody. I was in a funk." Evison started an anonymous blog, *Mike Muñoz Saves the World*, for a creative outlet. He drew on his landscaping years and his experiences helping to raise his nephews, who are biracial, to create Mike's voice. When he'd written 20,000 words, he realized it could become a novel.

The plot of *Lawn Boy* could be described as picaresque, with Mike getting a job and then losing it, briefly having enough money and then blowing it on an emergency. But this honestly reflects how a lot of people live. "All our lives are episodic," Evison said over the phone in July from the Port Townsend Writers' Conference, where he's been teaching for years. "That's OK. Mike's psychic, spiritual and social consciousness are not static. The interiority of Mike changes as he awakens."

Evison still lives on Bainbridge Island with his wife, Lauren, and his kids — Owen, Emma, and Lulu. "It's rural and jaw-droppingly beautiful. I can walk around in the woods all day, but still have access to Seattle." Now he's no longer a poor kid living on the margins of this wealthy community; he's an accomplished — and recognized — hometown hero. "I don't resent the people I grew up with," he says. "They're super supportive. Every time I drop a book, hundreds of people show up. But it's wealthier than ever."

As long as income inequality continues to rise, Jonathan Evison will remain an essential literary voice, writing with acute wit, empathy and insight about the people society too often overlooks, including the disabled (*The Revised Fundamentals of Caregiving*), the elderly (*This is Your Life, Harriet Chance!*), and of course, the lawn boy. BY JENNY SHANK

Jonathan Evison writes about the overlooked



ANDREW TOTH/GETTY IMAGES

Reconciling wildness and the American Dream

I got a text a few months ago from my sister, a senior in high school, asking me, “What is the American Dream?” At the time, I was splint-taping my bruised and swollen fingers, fingers that barely had the dexterity to punch out my reply: “The American Dream is dead.”

I was midway through my first trails project as a crewmember with the American Conservation Experience in Buckskin Mountain State Park in Arizona. The project had taken its toll on me mentally and physically. We were camped out for eight days at the park-affiliated campground, which straddles the Arizona/California border and is apparently *the* desert destination for the noisiest, most obnoxious motorized recreation equipment money can buy. The park knew its constituents well; the “campground” stretched its irrigation piping and yellow lines far beyond the paved compound, all the way out to the highway.

Our tents were set up unceremoniously behind the lavatory (complete with a half-dozen hot-water showers) on a plush plot of green, a selfless gift on behalf of the mighty, though dwindling, Colorado River, adjacent. I was fresh off nearly six straight months of wielding a chainsaw for ecological restoration projects — felling stringy, matchbox ponderosa pines in overcrowded stands, dirtying up a chain in the hairy belly of saltcedar along the San Pedro River — doing work that I felt really mattered, that felt somehow disentangled from the consumerist American dream of life.

My American dream is no dream at all. It is the stark reality of a freely flowing river, a banner of stars and the smeared cream of the Milky Way overhead. I’ve found myself *living* at the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon, and in the remote fissures of the Absaroka Mountains in the Washakie Wilderness of Wyoming.

My last night at Buckskin, I dreamt of waking to a dry Colorado River.

For the past three years, I’ve threatened my own social accessibility and mental stability by experimenting with wildness, both physically and philosophically. It began the summer of 2014, when I moved in with my grandparents on their ranch outside of Cody, Wyoming, in the heart of the Absaroka Mountains. Born and raised in the suburban Midwest, I transitioned directly from one dream to another. I can compare my development and exposure to life to that of a piece of steel — molten, impressionable, oblivious in the safety of suburbia, then dunked, subdued and set in the



cooling waters of wildness.

How do people go about deepening a story they don’t know the beginning of?

I’ve contemplated the conception of my wildness stranded up the cliff-embanked Castle Creek with my dog, Mesa. I found only my body, as a vessel for life. Shouting for direction in the Maze District of Canyonlands National Park in Utah, I heard only dizzy distortions of the same question, intensified, echoed back to me a thousand-fold.

I’ve found more direct answers in far less isolating, intensive pursuits. While reading D.H. Lawrence’s *The Rainbow* in Chaing Mai, Thailand, the roar of a million motorbikes faded to a nearly inaudible hum — I found my life revealed, clearly, in the character of Will Brangwen. Terry Tempest Williams’ words have woven together my own strangled thought-feelings of love and life — love of life. And Ed Abbey, the barbaric, masculine, self-critical genius, sat around the campfire with us that cold winter night in the Colorado mountains, sharing a bottle of cheap whisky and sentiments.

As I write this under the straggle-limbed influence of a richly ridged cottonwood trunk, I feel the changing of seasons. Bursts of life flurry forth in

the late autumn of Pinedale, Wyoming. Reds, yellows and oranges, painted over pockets of north- and northeast-bearing foothills, glow down on the bony streams, still recklessly teeming with feeding moose, thirsty willows and rising trout. The congregating sandhill cranes are a friendly reminder that livestock aren’t the only beneficiaries of alfalfa hay fields.

Recently, with more dexterous fingers and an evolving Earth-humanist mindset, I redefined the American dream for my little sister, and for myself. That first summer in the Absarokas, when the roots of my passions were exposed, ugly notions of humanity arose with them and prompted subsequent hermitage, isolation and varying states of misery. In disengaging so viciously with my upbringing, I neglected to address the innocent human tendencies that evolved from wildness to form the foundation of a (distorted) sense of place, community, home, in my Midwestern upbringing.

I was dreaming of a wilder world, a world in which I was not fully engaged.

The American dream is, in fact, dead. The American *life* awaits living — in the abundance of life’s forms, in the shared company of kindred spirits, in a place called “home.” BY JACK ANDRITSCH

HOWARD IGNATIUS/FLICKR CC

The Bell Prize for young essayists honors the spirit of our founder, Tom Bell. At a time when there was little coverage of environmental issues in the American West, Bell founded *HCN* in 1970 and was a strong voice for conservation. The Bell Prize is awarded to emerging writers, aged 18 to 25, who can carry on that legacy.

WEB EXTRA Read the runner-up essay, “Walking in Circles,” by Sawyer Hitchcock, at hcn.org.

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Top, Cibola National Forest from the crest of Sandia in winter of 2011. Below, sandhill cranes in a field along the Rio Grande Bosque. DAVID MUENCH

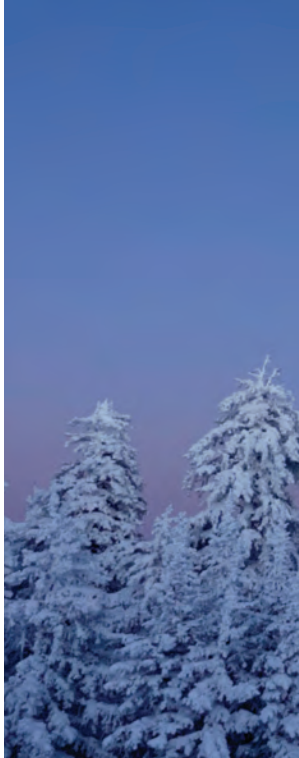
SANDIA: SEASONS OF A MOUNTAIN,

David Muench and Ruth Rudner
104 pages, large-format: \$34.95.
University of New Mexico Press, 2018.

"Sandia is an island in the sky, an oasis of the North rising out of the desert," writes Ruth Rudner in her tribute to the mountain that defines Albuquerque, New Mexico's skyline. In *Sandia: Seasons of a Mountain*, Rudner traces the mountain's longer seasons, exploring its deep importance to the area's Indigenous culture as well as discovering the more recent debates over balancing conservation with recreation and development.

While Rudner unwinds the history of the mountain in words, her husband, photographer David Muench, turns his lens on the annual passage of time. Photographs spanning decades reveal the many faces of Sandia. Autumn's glowing aspens give way to winter's snow-burdened firs. Then the mountain sheds its winter coat to reveal the cactus blooms of spring and the wildflower gardens of summer.

Through images and words, Muench and Rudner take a long, loving look at the mountain that looms large over the desert landscape. BY CARL SEGERSTROM



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Creature encounters and a few goodbyes

As autumn temperatures drop on Colorado's Western Slope, *High Country News* staffers have been having interesting encounters with local wildlife, some of them intentional and others entirely unsought.

Our editor-in-chief, **Brian Calvert**, went scouting for elk before hunting season, wandering the Gunnison National Forest for weeks, practicing his bull elk bugling and getting spotting help from editorial fellow **Jessica Kutz** and intern **Elena Saavedra Buckley**. Once the season began, however, the elk proved elusive. Associate Photo Editor **Luna Anna Archey**, on the other hand, was *not* looking for the pack-rat that moved into her Prius, building nests in the trunk and hood. Apparently, the critter decided it didn't like the neighborhood, and Luna repaired the damage herself. Our editors never fail to be resourceful.

In Paonia, we're sad to say goodbye to **Tammy York**, a longtime star in our customer service department, who left her post at the end of October. We appreciate all the time and care she's given to *HCN* and its subscribers, and we will miss her tremendously.

Some of our editors and writers appeared on the airwaves: **Graham Lee Brewer**, a contributing editor for our Tribal Affairs Desk, discussed Elizabeth Warren's DNA test and claims of Native ancestry on WNYC's *The Takeaway*. (Bottom line: It's more complicated than you think.) **Jason Plautz**, who co-authored our last cover story, "When Your Neighborhood Goes Boom," spoke about the piece on KGNU in Boulder.

Joseph Belli visited our Paonia headquarters by way of Hollister, California, leaving

us a copy of his new book, *The Diablo Diary*. (In August, we published his essay on ecological changes in a landscape he loved as a child.) Joseph also stopped by our satellite editorial office in Gunnison to talk shop with Brian. Meanwhile, in Paonia, Development Director **Laurie Milford**, through moonlight grant writing, helped secure \$29,000 for the North Fork Montessori at Crawford Elementary School for a new playground.

We would like to honor the memory of longtime readers and supporters: **Bart Butterfield**, a biologist and GIS specialist at the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, was an avid birder devoted to the natural world, and to *HCN*; he asked that donations be made in his memory. **Libby Kirkpatrick**, a vibrant philanthropist in the Denver area, treasured her family and the land of the West and spent as much time as she could on her cattle ranch near Steamboat Springs; and **Norma Biggar** of Las Vegas, Nevada, was a career geologist who always made time for hiking, traveling, propagating desert plants and Contra dancing. Our hearts are with their families and friends.

And, finally, two corrections. In our Oct. 15 cover story, "Nature Retreat," we mischaracterized Imperial Beach's federal lawsuit seeking to hold oil companies responsible for climate change damage: It was lowered to a state court, not dismissed. In "When Your Neighborhood Goes Boom" (*HCN*, 10/19/18), a photograph of the Erie Skate Park showed an oil and gas maintenance rig, not a drill rig, as the caption stated. We regret the errors.

—Elena Saavedra Buckley,
for the staff



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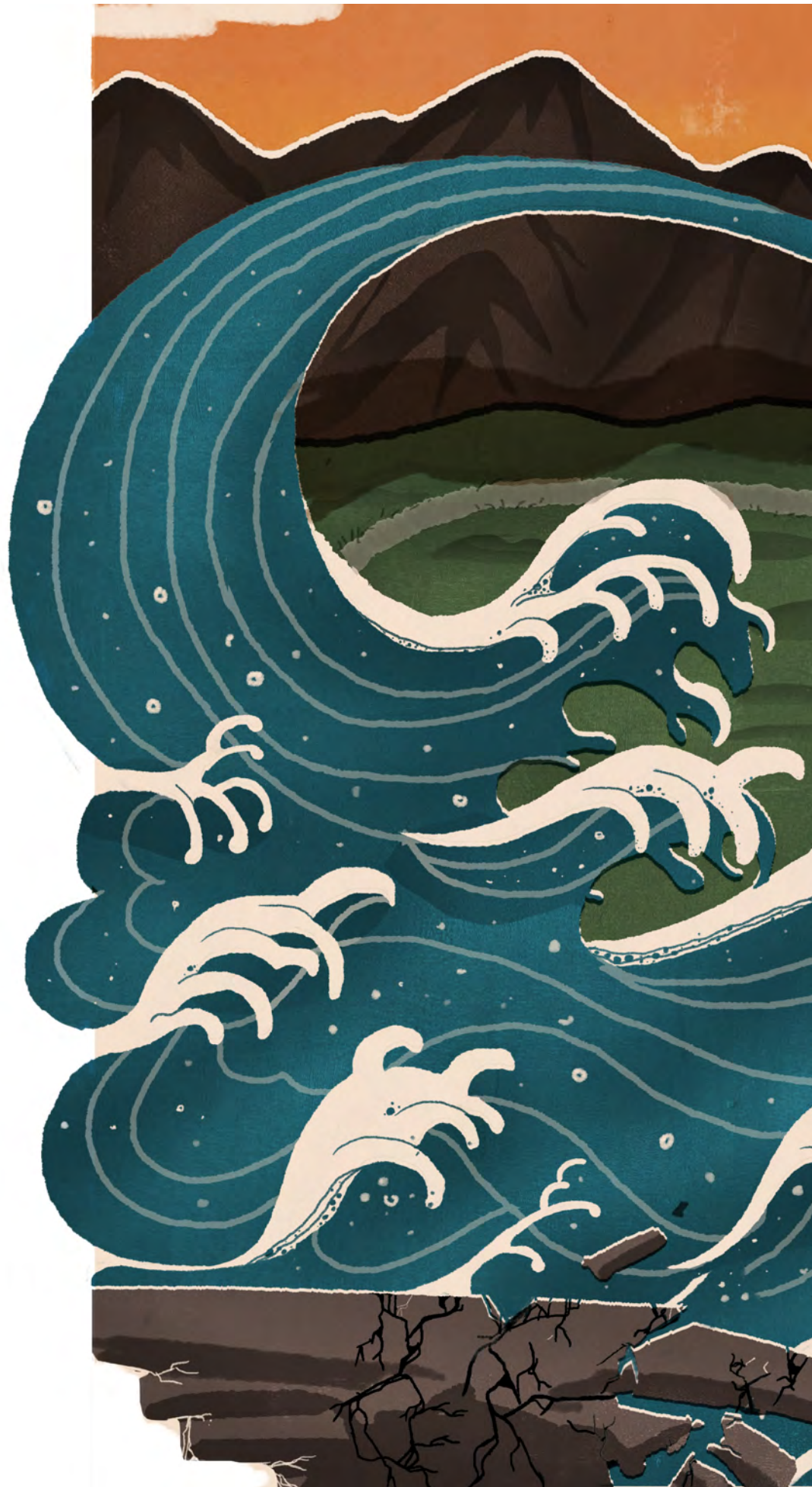


Brian guessed elk would appear around 7 p.m. Sure enough, they crossed the ridge at 7:01 p.m. ELENA SAAVEDRA BUCKLEY/HIGH COUNTRY NEWS

EXCERPT BY KAREN PIPER
ILLUSTRATIONS BY PABLO IGLESIAS

I noticed Keith at Espresso Roma when he was talking about blowing up the Columbia River dams, all 14 of them. I recognized the tenor of this coffee-shop conversation immediately. It was the one about “How far should we go?” or “How much are we willing to risk?” For example, how far would you go to keep an old-growth forest from being logged? Would you stand in front of the logging truck or would you blow up the truck? It was a test of your moral boundaries, which sometimes deteriorated into “Would you throw your dog off a cliff for a million dollars?”

I knew this was the “Would it be worth it if you killed one person” quandary.



Eco-Terrorism for Fun



In Eugene, I came to realize, friends came and went in complex combinations, building new realities while tearing down old ones. My friend Lydia Yuknavitch joined a lesbian separatist commune in the woods, only to return because there was no plumbing. “You put down an outhouse, fill it up with shit, and then move it to a different place,” she said. “But eventually, you’re falling through into shit as you walk around.” To me, Lydia was a fearless, braless beast with her long blond mane, cargo boots, and patchwork Depression Era-looking skirts. Other friends of mine went to live off the grid in “sustainable” communes. One or two built cities in trees and dropped out of school to keep those trees from being cut down. Some people in that crowd poured cement in holes they had dug in the ground with one side of a handcuff stuck in the cement. Then they would put a hand in the other. To block the bulldozers.

But I was too shy for that sort of thing and so just kept reading books, wide-eyed at all the transmutations around me. Inside, I was transmuting, too. I had switched from English after my MA to get an MA in environmental studies and then a Ph.D. in comparative literature. I wanted to read everything, get degrees in everything. Until I maxed out my student loans, that was the only plan I had. I stayed eight years and met Keith in my last.

At that coffee shop, Keith was wearing a blue Gore-Tex jacket, a wool plaid shirt, and blue jeans that were clearly ripped because they were old and not because it was trendy. He looked as if he had just come from a fish-packing plant. With dark thick Eastern European hair, enormous blue eyes and pale skin, he was smoking with the nervous apprehension of someone who looked as if he might get caught. Sitting across

worth it, eh?” The rhythm of his voice was quiet and reassuring. Only a Canadian could talk about killing and make it sound like a polite proposition. His friend still said nothing, as Keith continued, “The Columbia dam system is blocking salmon that are trying to get up the river to spawn. It’s destroying our fishing industry, people’s livelihoods.” Our fishing industry, he said. “We’ve got to help the salmon. ...” His friend kept nodding. “Don’t you think? I’m serious.”

I found out Keith was also getting his master’s in the environmental studies program. We often sat next to each other in the graduate student lounge, working at our respective white plastic boxy computers. Keith was Canadian-shy so never spoke to me, though I would look up and watch him working on the computer. Every now and then, I would find him looking at me, not as invisible as I thought I was.

One day, an email showed up on my computer, green lines on a black background. “Student lounge is dreary, isn’t it?” it said. I looked around the room, and he waved. I introduced myself — on email. Before long, our emails turned into missives, manifestos and declarations, which we kept writing even after we started going out. I still have a box full of them.

I asked about his hometown, Vancouver, British Columbia. “Isn’t it dreary?” I wrote.

“Even this summer in the worst rain of my life it wasn’t dreary because of all the life,” he wrote back. “It was like moving through one large living thing, like being inside of a whale. ... Sure, some days were raining like hell and others were equally hot, but the word ‘dreary’ never came into my mind. ‘Alive’ certainly did.”

“I’ve devised a system for warning the people in Portland, but even if a few die, I say it would still be worth it, eh?”

from him was a friend with curly grayish hair, cargo cutoffs and an old denim satchel, nodding as if taking directions. Next to them, a woman in plastic flip-flops, two skirts, a wool scarf and a corduroy jacket was sitting with a man in a “Free Leonard Peltier” T-shirt, vigorously engaged in a political discussion.

Keith kept looking over at me, nervous that someone was listening. “All you have to do is dynamite the hillside above the reservoir and the water will overtop the dam,” he said. “That would be enough to topple the first dam, and none of the other dams would have the strength to keep back the flood of water. The rest would come down like dominoes, all 14, starting in Canada but gaining enough momentum to take out the big dams in America.” As I listened, I shook my head. While you might eventually forget that dog you threw off a cliff, I knew you would never forget the person you killed.

It was not that I had a problem with sabotage. For my Composition 101 class, I had assigned *Ecodefense: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching*, which teaches techniques such as spiking trees, building smoke bombs, and putting sugar in gas tanks to disable logging equipment. I had taught *The Monkey Wrench Gang* by Edward Abbey, a novel whose heroes blow up the Hoover Dam. So I knew about blowing up dams. You did it to save the ecosystem. Perhaps we all contemplated it, at one point or another, as we watched tender Oregon firs plowed down and carted away in Weyerhaeuser trucks, or when we saw newly dead trees sticking out of reservoirs. We all wanted to do something to stop it.

Keith continued, “I’ve devised a system for warning the people in Portland, but even if a few die, I say it would still be

I shared an essay I had written about the Oregon woods, and he responded, “To have language that can circle something living, like a relationship, like putting your arms around a big cedar, feeling its life and power, while allowing the roots and stems to continue to grow. By holding something living like this, the language becomes equally living. It makes us alive. Your essay does this, these things.” I watched him typing, his fingers moving so fast, so freely, unlike mine. I watched his brain working as he typed.

No one had ever written to me like this, like someone who knew me. Even then our transactions occurred only on email, as if there were a wall down the middle of the student lounge. On my side of the wall, he reached me in my place of isolation.

One night, we ran into each other at the gay bar, the only disco in town, where we had each been invited by mutual friends. A big sign at the entrance read “No Overt Heterosexual Activity.” A friend of mine had been thrown out for such activity. Now I sat across the table from Keith, a disco ball spinning overhead, while one of my girlfriends flirted with him. We looked at each other, secretively, every now and then. My blood boiled a little when Keith touched her neck for a moment after she asked him to put on her necklace. He spoke with her all night and never to me.

The next day, fearing he’d gone home with her, I found an email in my inbox that had been sent after we’d left the bar. Keith wrote, “You are hard to read. You don’t have a jacket that you didn’t give up after leaving the Hells Angels. You don’t dance like you studied ballet for 20 years (you dance better). I have never seen you eat so I can’t tell which hand you use for a fork. I am curious because you hint of things not right although

what I see looks very well adjusted indeed.”

I wrote back, “Let’s get a shot of tequila.”

I watched him, fearfully, when he finally came in and opened his email, but he replied, “Tell me where you live and I’ll bring the tequila.” Is this how love begins, in fear, and glances and encrypted emails?

Keith was a spy into my life. He captured my love of furry animals and desert wanderings and wrapped them up inside his brain. He found my secret backyard.

That night, we made love on the roaring banks of the McKenzie River. The rocks poked into my back, even though he laid out his Gore-Tex for me, but the pain did not matter. Nothing did but this. After that, we had sex in hammocks, on beaches, on mossy forest floors, anywhere. We were in love.

He felt the waterfalls inside his head too.

Our only problem was that we’d met too late, or so it seemed at the time. After eight long years, this was my last year of funding at the University of Oregon. The thought of what came next was terrifying to me, with professors hardly in demand. My friends ended up working in chocolate factories, starting nonprofits, or becoming waiters or waitresses. One friend said he planned to hold a sign on the freeway that read “Will Interpret Novels for Food.” So when I started getting phone calls about job interviews, rather than that dreaded letter in the mail, I was shocked. Where would I go, and was I ready?

It turned out it would be the University of Missouri, where I was finally hired. You must understand that we have no real choice in the matter as to where we go. It’s a national job search, and at the time, hundreds of literature Ph.D.s were getting rejected for every tenure-track job opening. Many ended up teaching at below-poverty wages with one-year or even one-semester contracts. Some of them still do, wondering every year if that job will be there for them the next. For decades. Others worked at the nice restaurants in town, offering a little conversation on Proust with dinner. Hoping smart people walked in.

I wrote to Keith, afraid to tell him in person. “I got a job in Missouri,” I wrote.

Surprisingly unflustered, he wrote back, “Maybe living there will spur you to write more, to reminisce over lost land, lost home. ... Maybe you will take root there, find yourself going to church, gossiping, picketing abortion centers, quilting, polishing silverware, watching evangelists, darning socks, looking for UFOs in cornfields ... and then again, maybe you won’t.” He did not mention what this might mean for us. We had been together less than a month.

I felt unmoored, and each time this happened, the pain seemed to be worse. Maybe this was because I was finally inhabiting my own skin ... but my skin hurt. Ever so slowly, Oregon had become home to me — the chanterelles that popped by the bucketful in the forest, the mountain huckleberries I ate until I was sick, and the wild winter ocean. Even the rain. Again, I wrote to Keith, “How am I supposed to leave the West Coast? I keep saying that but no one takes me seriously. I’ve won the lottery, gotten a job — and everyone is screaming congratulations — and it is happy, I do deserve it. But then this other thing starts to nag ... how am I supposed to leave? This place, all of it, has made me who I am. And now I feel I’ve been consigned to exile in some foreign land, where I have no identity or history, where there is no picture in my head.” At the time, it truly felt like a disaster, and that disaster would keep growing.

So when Keith asked if we could hike up Mount Pisgah to see the “super” moon and have a “talk,” I expected the worst. We’ll still visit, I pictured him saying, as Garrett once had.

It was a pitch-black night as we started up the hill, passing a



bottle of tequila back and forth. The moss beneath our feet was dark and squishy. At the top, we leaned against each other in our Gore-Tex jackets, saying relatively little. His black and gray jacket was patched, and mine, navy, was second-hand. Then the moon burst over the horizon, huge and red and glowing like a spaceship rising, ready to suck us up and take us somewhere.

“Wow,” I said. “That’s cool.”

“So American.” Keith laughed, pulling me close. “Wo-o-w.” “Had enough of that, e-e-h?” I playfully swatted him.

As I did, he grabbed my hand and started to suck my fingers, one by one, and it looked as if he were trying to tie a knot in a cherry stem with his tongue at the same time.

That’s a bit odd, I thought before I realized what was happening.

He pulled away to reveal a ring on my left ring finger. I stared at it stupidly, thinking the stone looked black. He asked, “Will you marry me?”

“How did you do that?” I replied, impressed, then, “Yes!”

I screamed and hugged him, laughing. “You were freaking me out!” I said.

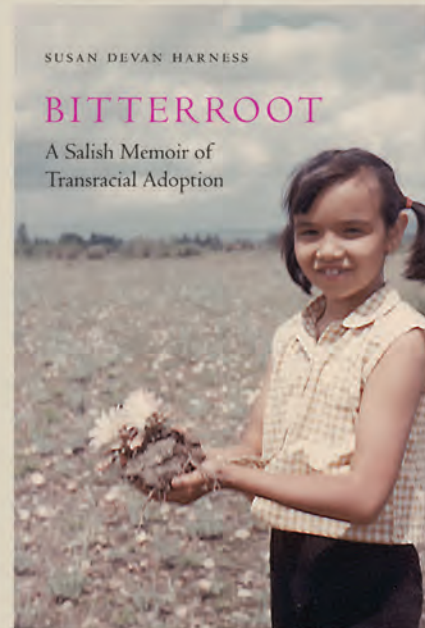
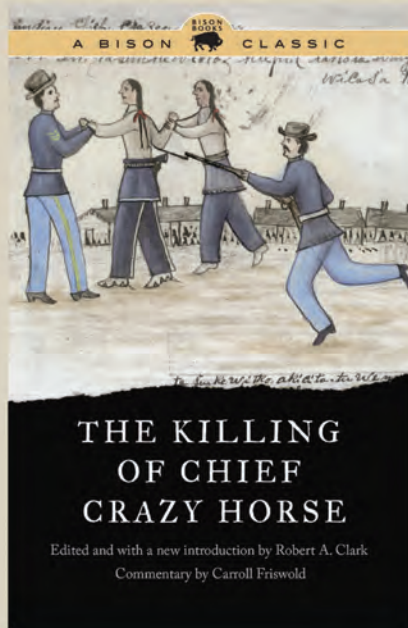
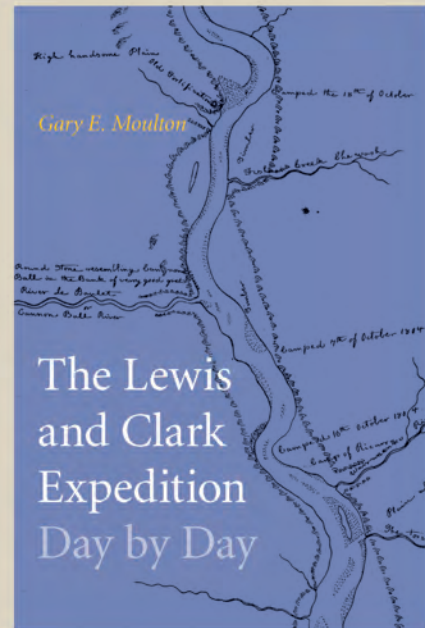
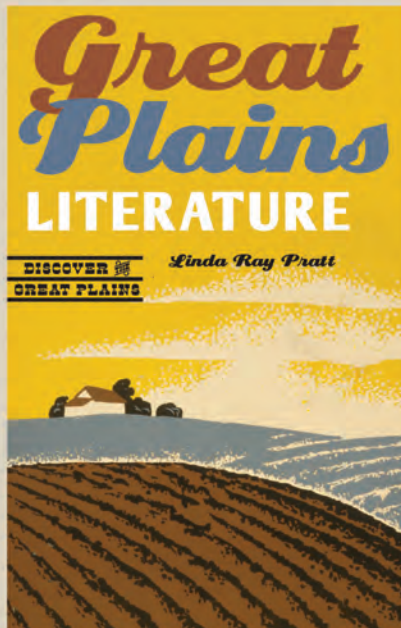
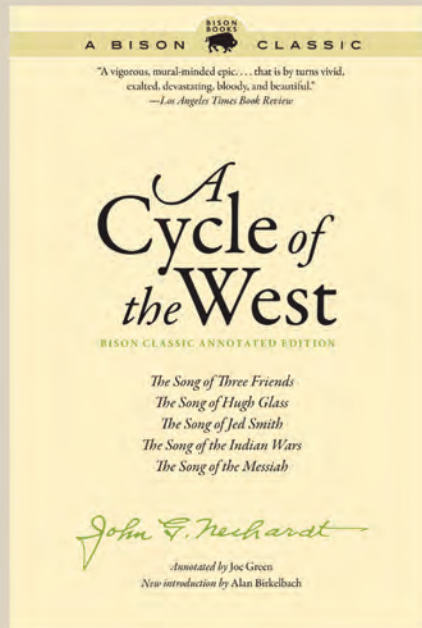
In the moonlight, the gem was so dark that he had to tell me it was a ruby, though I did not care if it was onyx, or black diamonds, or a piece of lava. He was my love.

It never occurred to me then that perhaps I was rushing into things. I was desperate for something to stabilize me, thinking I could not handle entering a whole new world alone, not this time. Missouri may as well have been another planet, so far from home. What would I find there?

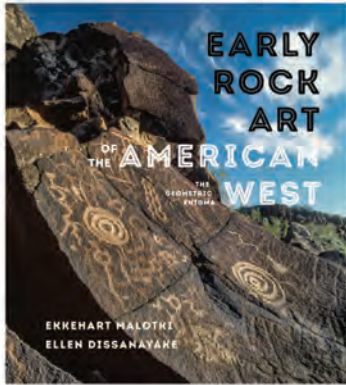
The moon was the color of Agent Orange. □

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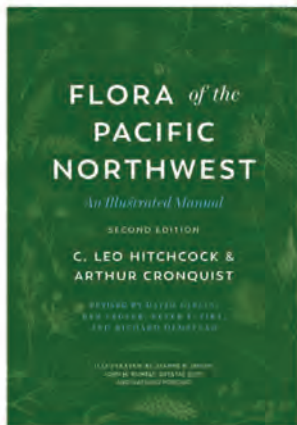


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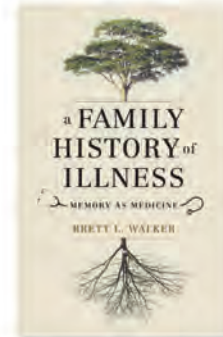
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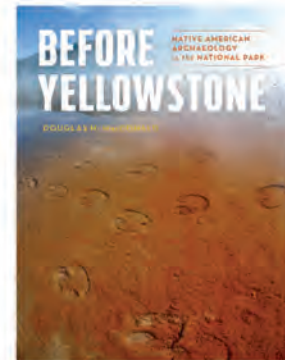


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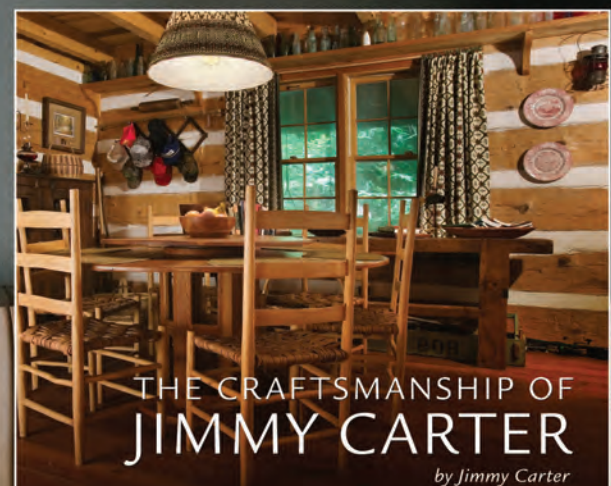
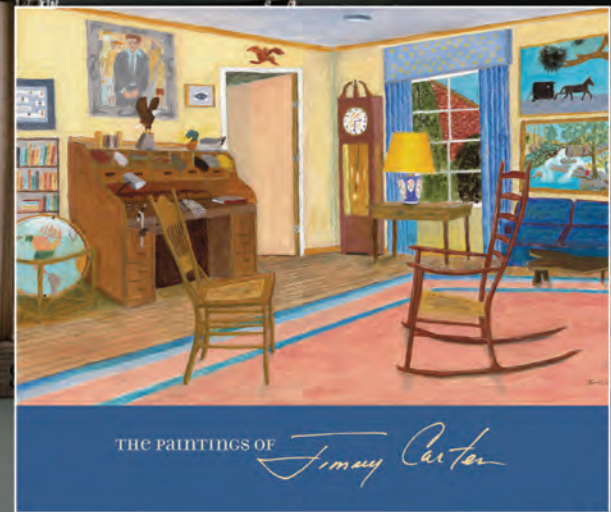
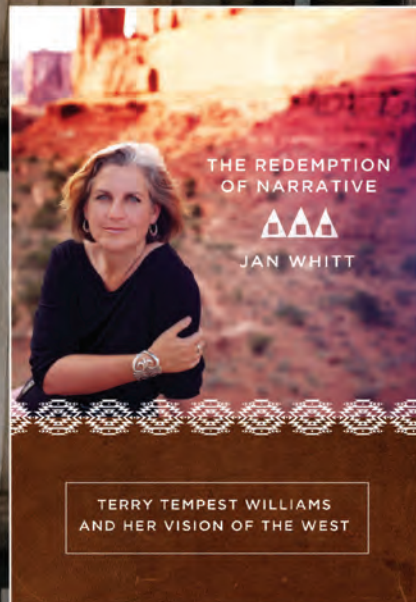
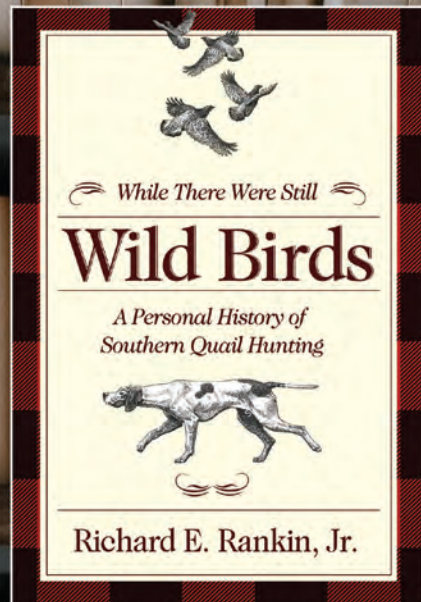
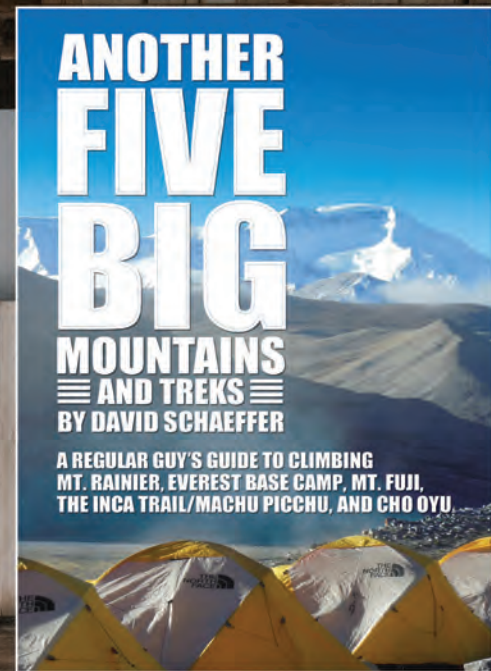
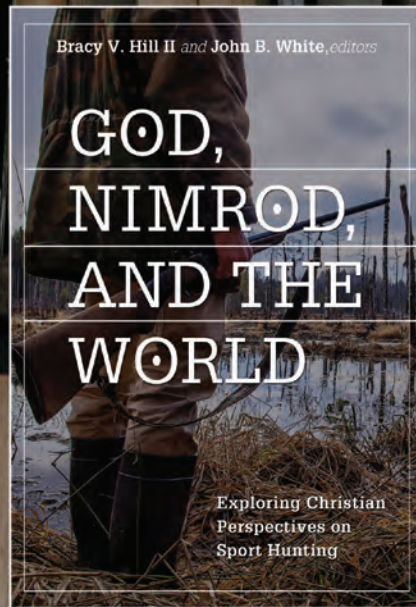
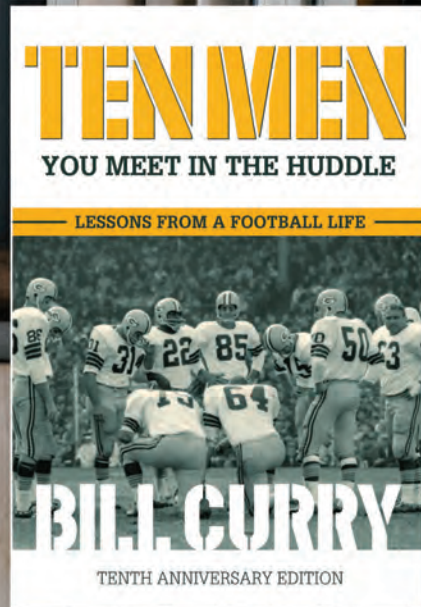
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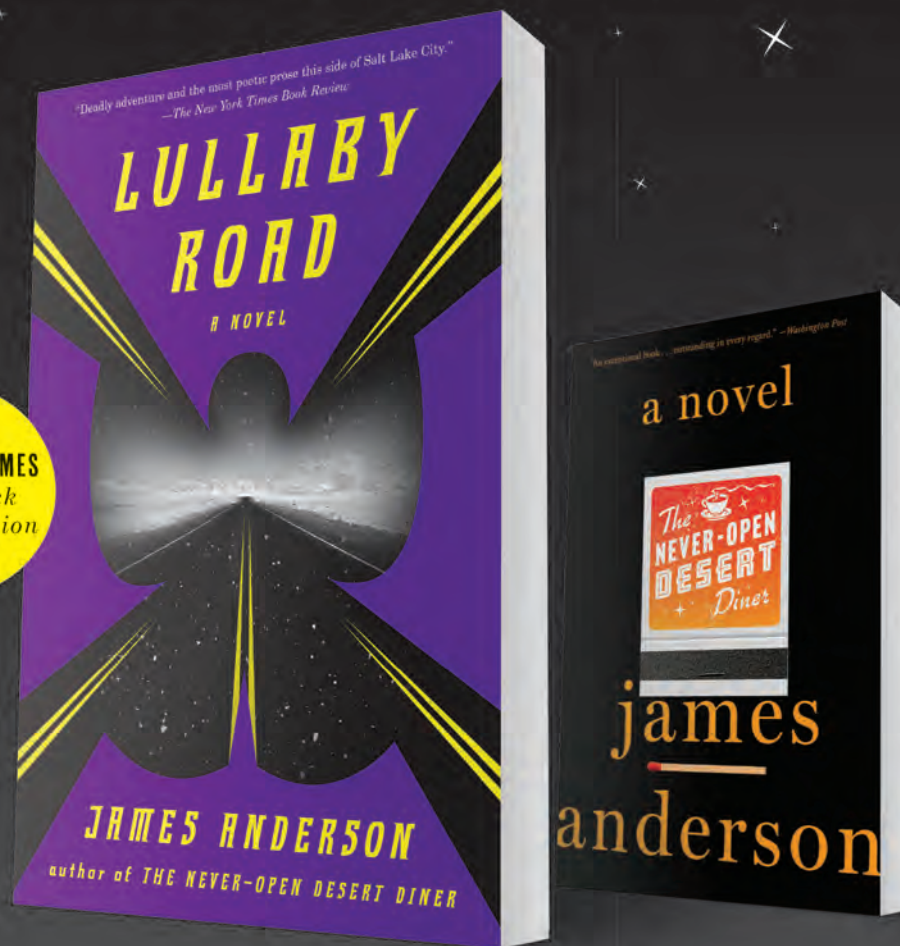


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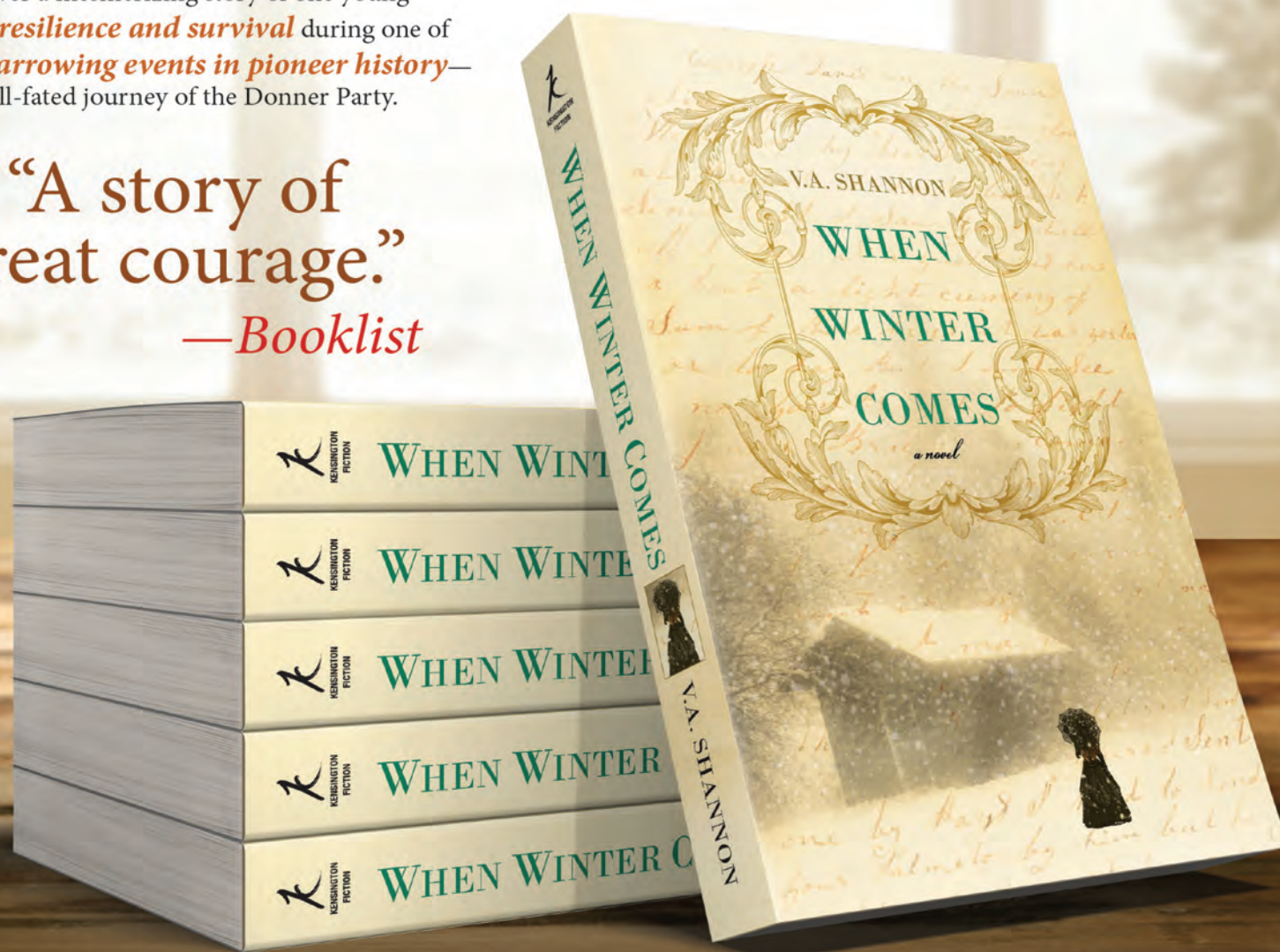
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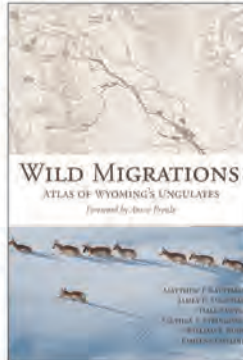
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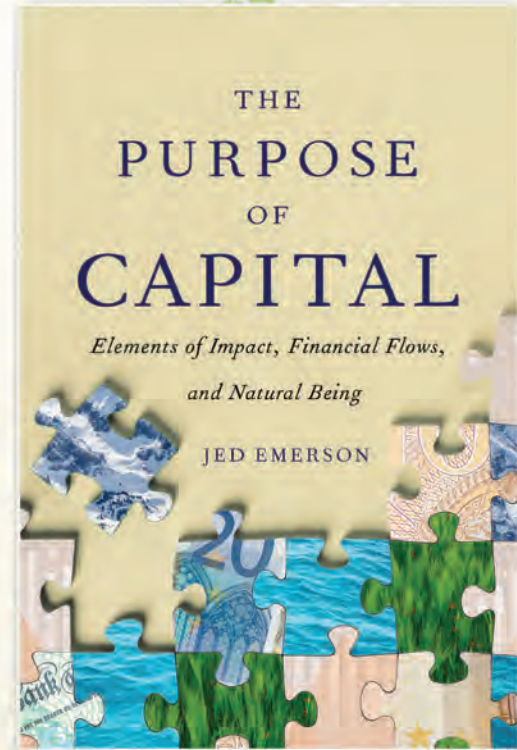
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BY JODI PETERSON

FICTION

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The Best Bad Things: A Novel Katrina Carrasco, MCD

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Rough Animals Rae DelBianco, Arcade

Heartbreaker: A Novel Claudia Dey, Random House

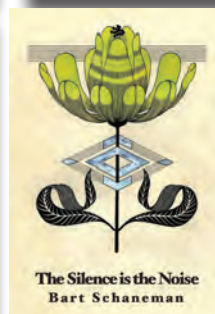
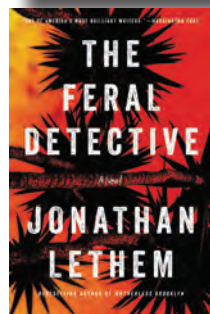
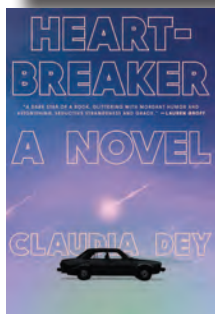
The Sea of Grass Walter Echo-Hawk, Fulcrum Publishing

Crossing Vines: A Novel Rigoberto González, University of Oklahoma Press

Trinity Louisa Hall, Ecco

Mostly White: A Novel Alison Hart, Torrey House Press

Trouble No Man Brian Hart, HarperPerennial, January 2019



A River of Stars Vanessa Hua, Ballantine

The Golden State Lydia Kiesling, MCD

Immigrant, Montana Amitava Kumar, Knopf

Driving to Geronimo's Grave and Other Stories Joe R. Lansdale, Subterranean

The Feral Detective: A Novel Jonathan Lethem, Ecco

Lost Children Archive: A Novel Valeria Luiselli, Random House, February 2019

Son of Amity Peter Nathaniel Malae, Oregon State University

Wolves of Eden Kevin McCarthy, Norton

The Frame-Up Meghan Scott Molin, 47North

Gateway to the Moon Mary Morris, Doubleday/Talese

The Caregiver Samuel Park, Simon & Schuster

The Shortest Way Home Miriam Parker, Dutton

Hearts of the Missing Carol Potenza, Minotaur, December

Magdalena Mountain Robert Michael Pyle, Counterpoint

The Silence is the Noise Bart Schaneman, Trident Press

All That Is Left Is All That Matters Mark Slouka, W.W. Norton & Company

Don't Send Flowers

Martín Solares, Black Cat

The Removes Tatjana Soli, FSG/Crichton

The Electric State Simon Stålenhag, Skybound

Every Other Weekend Zulema Renee Summerfield, Little, Brown

Static Flux Natasha Young, Metatron Press

Family Trust: A Novel Kathy Wang, William Morrow

Whiskey When We're Dry John Larison, Viking

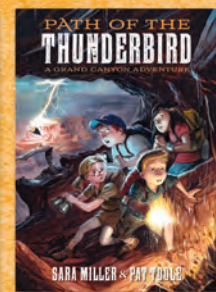
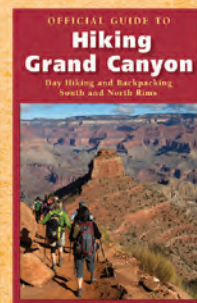
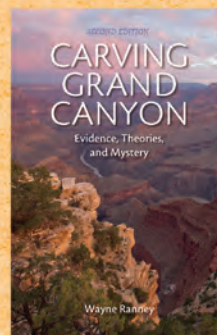
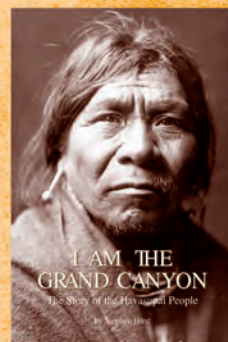


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Pam Houston, Norton, January 2019

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Sondra G. Jones, University of Utah Press, January

Wild Migrations: Atlas of Wyoming's Ungulates

Matthew J. Kauffman et al., foreword by Annie Proulx, Oregon State University

Dear Los Angeles: The City in Diaries and Letters, 1542 to 2018

David Kipen, Modern Library, December

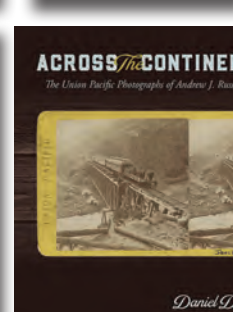
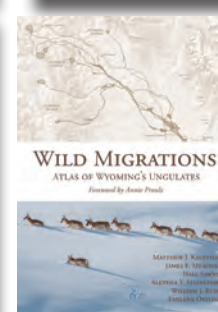
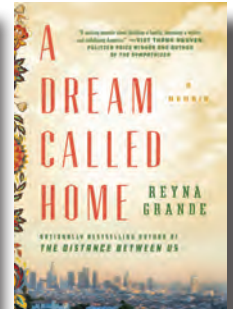
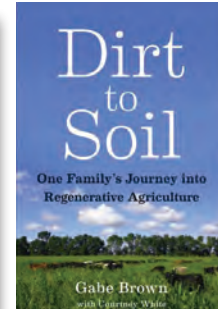
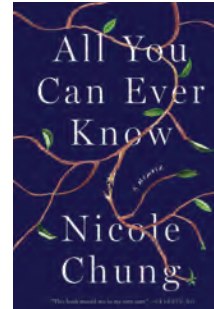
Campfire Stories: Tales from America's National Parks

ed. Dave and Ilyssa Kyu, Mountaineers

The Oasis This Time: Living and Dying with Water in the West

Rebecca Lawton, Torrey House Press, March 2019

Please see New books, page 27



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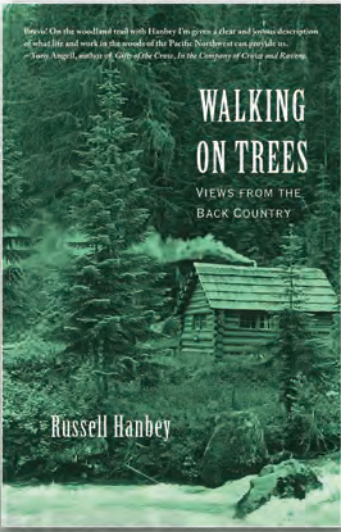
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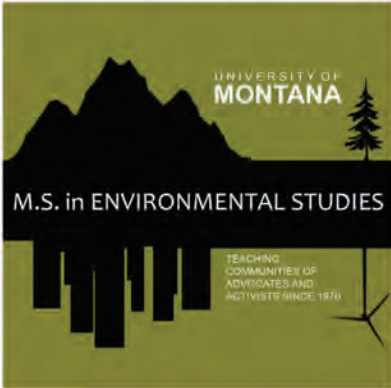
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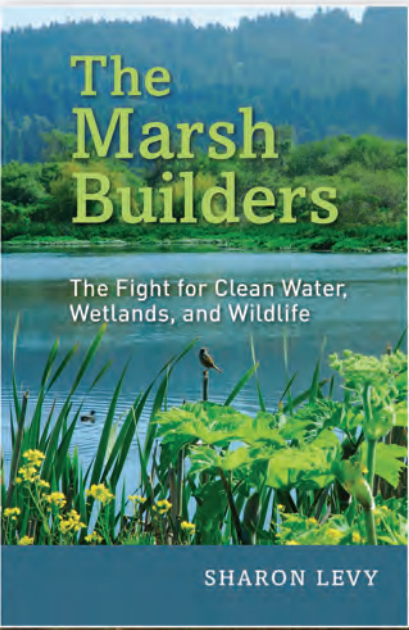


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Recent Books by Our Environmental Writing Alumni:
Bad Luck Way by Bryce Andrews
While Glaciers Slept by M. Jackson
An Absolutely Remarkable Thing by Hank Green

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New books, continued from page 23

A Study of Southwestern

Archaeology Stephen H. Lekson, University of Utah Press

Debunking Creation Myths about America's Public Lands

John D. Leshy, University of Utah Press

It Happened Like This: A Life

in Alaska Adrienne Lindholm, Mountaineers

The Salt Lake Papers: From the Years in the Earthscapes of Utah

Edward Lueders, University of Utah Press

Stray: A Memoir of a Runaway

Tanya Marquardt, Little A

Reimagining a Place for the Wild

edited by Leslie Miller and Louise Excell, University of Utah Press, December

Caribou Rainforest: From Heartbreak to Hope

David Moskowitz, Braided River

Food from the Radical Center: Healing our Land and Communities

Gary Nabhan, Island Press

The Dreamer and the Doctor

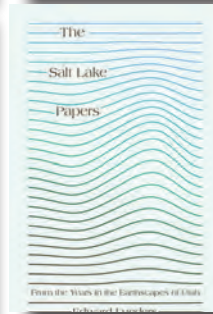
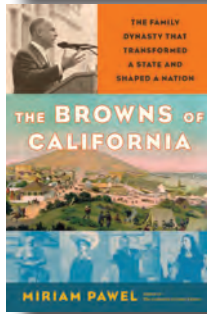
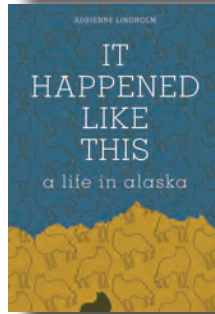
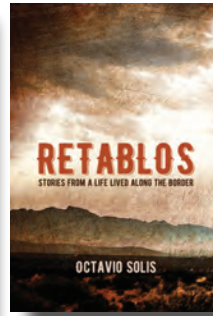
Jack Nisbet, Sasquatch Books

The Library Book

Susan Orlean, Simon & Schuster

The Browns of California: The Family Dynasty That Transformed a State and Shaped a Nation

Miriam Pawel, Bloomsbury



Impossible Owls: Essays Brian Phillips, FSG Originals

Gay Rights and the Mormon Church: Intended Actions, Unintended Consequences

Gregory A. Prince, University of Utah Press, February

Here and There: A Fire Survey

Stephen J. Pyne, University of Arizona Press

The Spoils of Dust: Reinventing the Lake that Made Los Angeles

Alexander Robinson, Applied Research + Design Publishing

Rising: Dispatches from the New American Shore

Elizabeth Rush, Milkweed

On Call in the Arctic: A Doctor's Pursuit of Life, Love and Miracles in the Alaskan Frontier

Thomas J. Sims, Pegasus

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Sarah Smarsh, Scribner

Retablos: Stories from a Life Lived Along the Border

Octavio Solis, City Lights

Frontier Rebels: The Fight for Independence in the American West, 1765-1776

Patrick Spero, W.W. Norton & Company

The Sun is a Compass: A 4,000-Mile Journey into the Alaskan Wilds

Caroline Van Hemert, Little, Brown Spark

Sagebrush Collaboration: How Harney County Defeated the

Takeover of the Malheur Wildlife Refuge

Peter Walker, Oregon State University Press

Raw Material: Working Wool in the West

Stephany Wilkes, Oregon State University

Path of the Puma: The Remarkable Resilience of the Mountain Lion

Jim Williams, Patagonia

The Three-Minute Outdoorsman Returns: From Mammoth on the Menu to the Benefits of Moose Drool

Robert M. Zink, University of Nebraska Press □

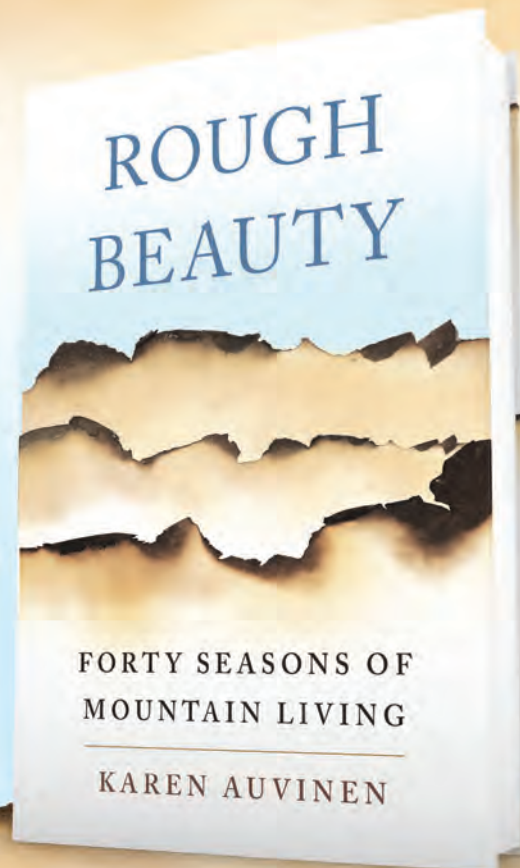
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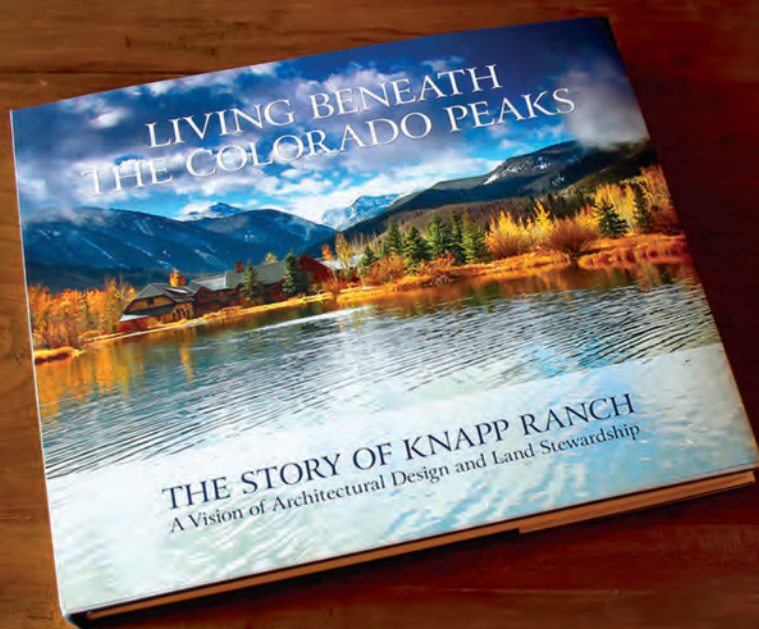
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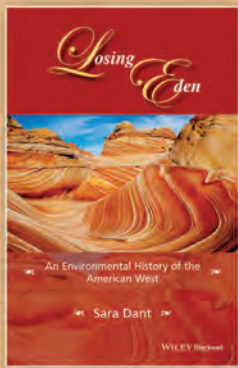
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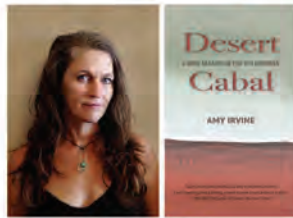
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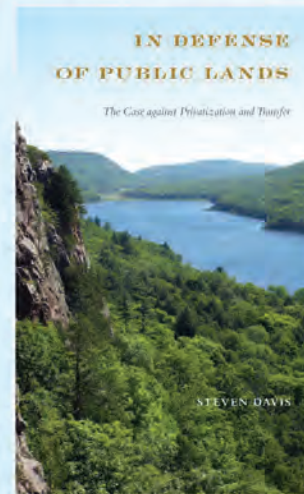


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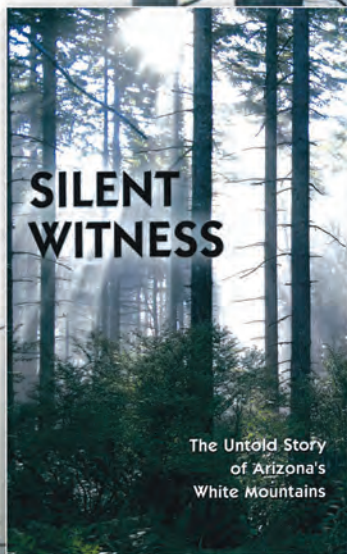
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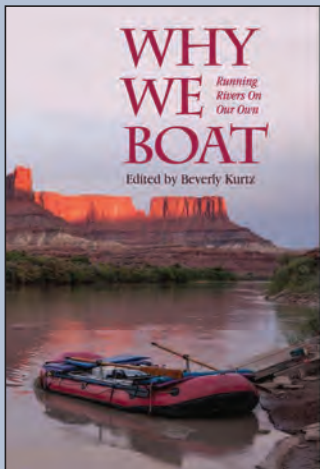
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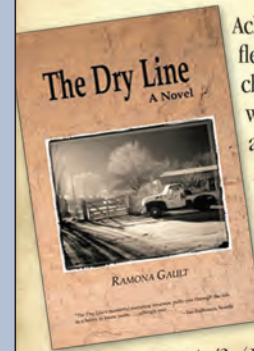
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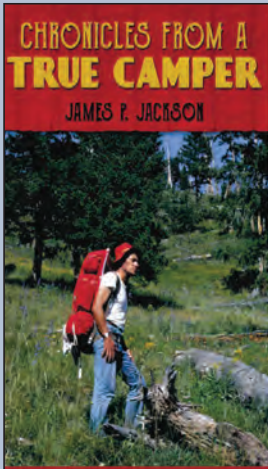
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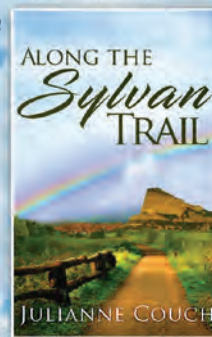
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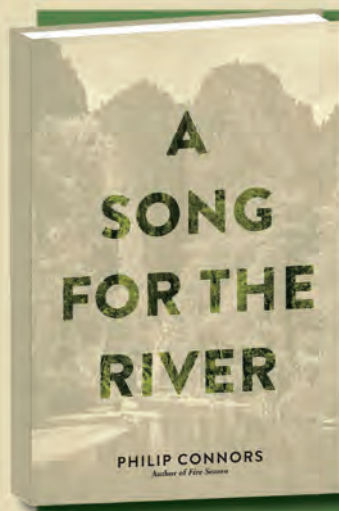


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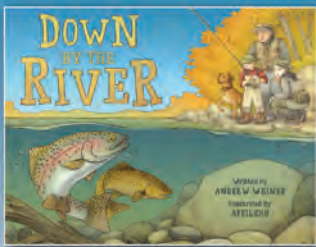
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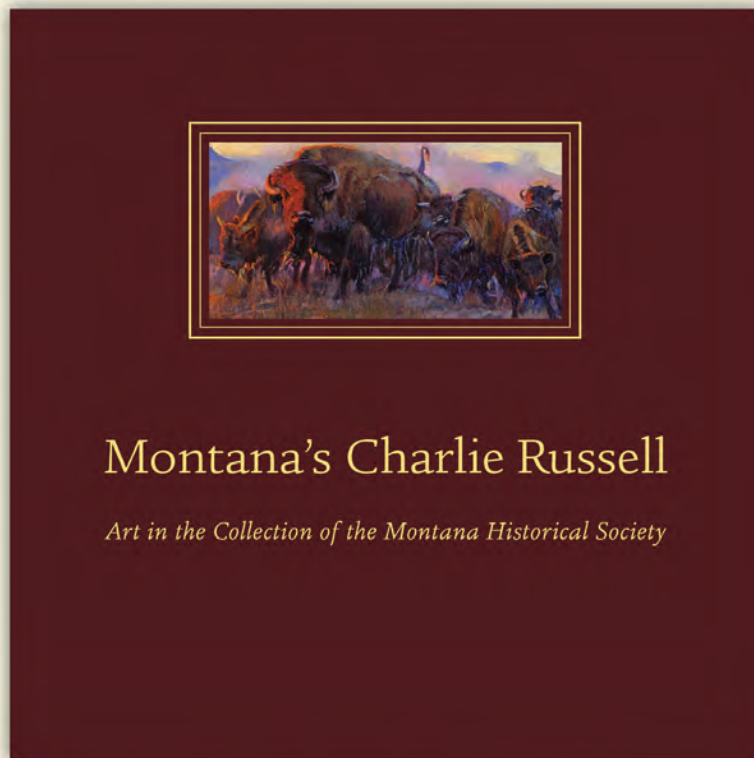
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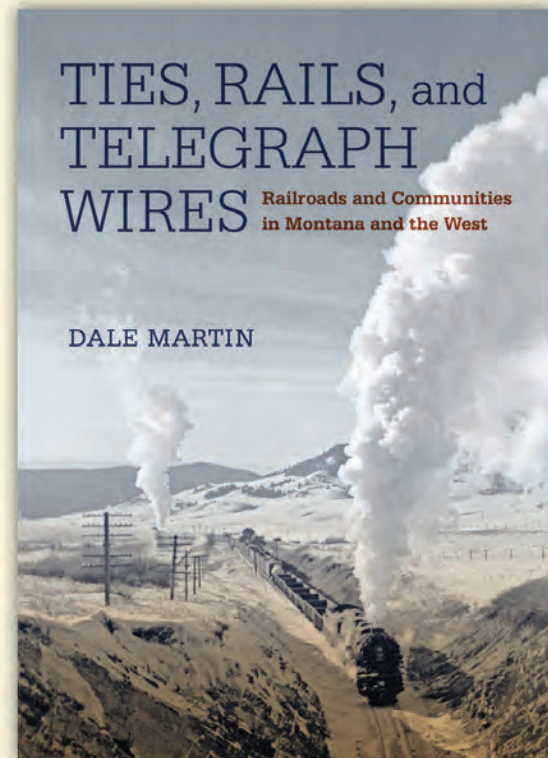
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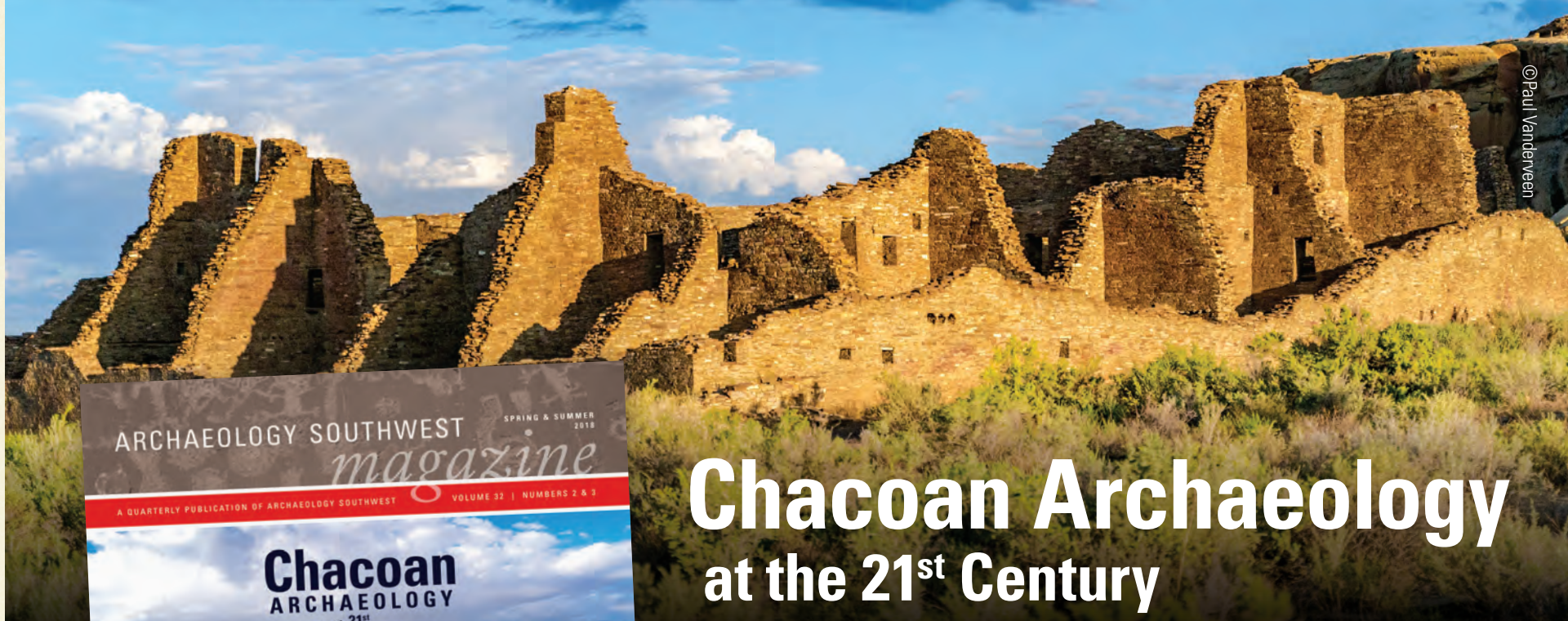
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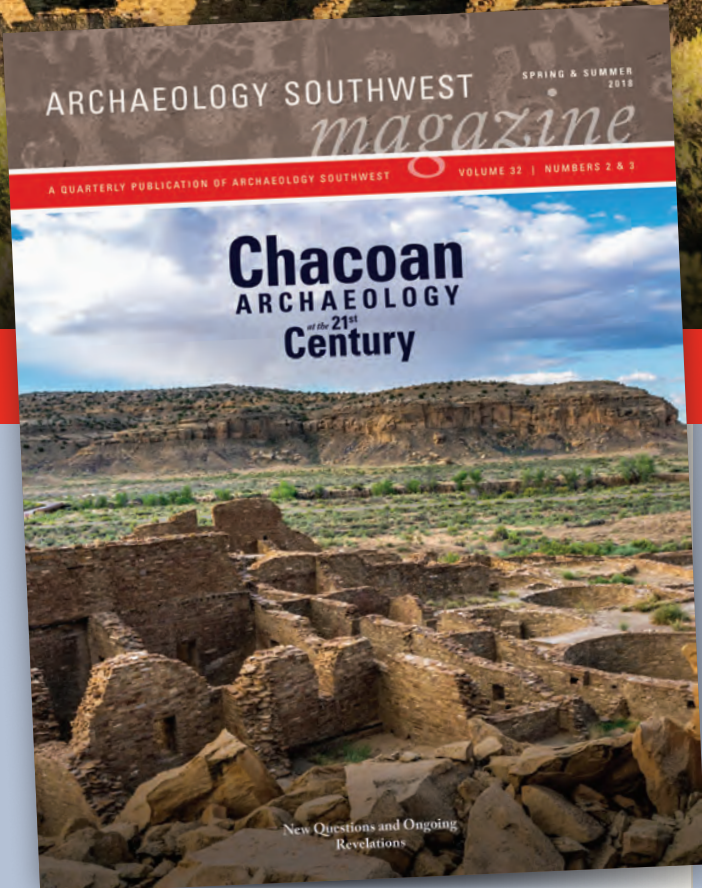
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Issue editors:
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Balancing Survival and

Ray takes a powdered donut from the bag and shoves it into his mouth. The fact that there are still things in this country so good and perfect that cost 50 cents is a goddamn miracle. Spring has spread itself throughout the valley and the sagebrush smells strong. The mud makes more work and makes all of it more a mess, but that seems right for a world set on making itself brand-new. Up top on the mesa, the rivers will be breaking open; the aspen will be green.

He pushes open the Dunbars' door without knocking: It's gotten to be like that between them. In two months, he'll be a deputy again, which is good, it's something his family can depend on; it's something he can do well again if he can keep himself straight. But he will miss the wind outside, and the heat of the cows in the morning and the feeling he gets from being around Jackie and Susan.

Jackie's at the kitchen table, a thick medical book in front of her; she hardly looks up when he comes in.

"I didn't know what you gals liked, so I got one of everything." Ray clears his throat and sets the white paper bag near her book.

"Thought I'd clear out that dead skunk in the pipe first thing. And I want to prep handline today. Sue ready to get to it?"

"She's mad at me." Jackie shuts the book and taps her finger against it. "Ray, can I ask your opinion about something?"

Ray shifts his feet. He always feels a little nervous around Jackie, like every day he has to prove himself over again. That someone as smart as Jackie Dunbar has expectations for him is not unflattering — it makes him want to rise to all occasions, to be better than he is — but on the edge of that is a deep fear that he doesn't have what it takes. It's easier with Sue.

"Shoot," he says.

"Do you think life just happens to a person? I mean, don't you think it's possible to improve your life?"

"I think it's good to try. It's good to help other people out. But some days the wind blows the right way. Some days it doesn't."

"Sure, but you think we have the capacity to change, right? I mean, isn't that inherent to human nature?"

"I don't know, Jackie." He counts his dead silently to himself. Marcus Wilson. The Iraqi kid driving toward the checkpoint. The woman with the bag of groceries. The little girl on the wrong side of a tank.

Ray takes another powdered donut from the bag and shoves it into his mouth. He chews for a long time, gets some water from the sink. What he believes isn't something he knows how to explain, especially not to someone who has never been married or gone to war. He doesn't know how to say that getting older is about setting down the hope that everything works out if you just try hard enough.

"You ever read your horoscope?" he says, finally.

"You don't believe in that stuff."

"I read it in the paper sometimes; honestly, I read it a lot."

"You have to know some stoned kid fresh out of journalism school writes those."

"I never thought about who writes them." Ray shrugs, the color rising in his face. "Don't you ever want to feel like you're not in charge of everything?"

Jackie stares at him for a second before her face softens.

"All the time."

She smiles and Ray has the feeling that he's passed some sort of test and he nods, ready at last to get outside, when

Susan runs into the kitchen, her hair flying, her cheeks red like they've been slapped. "The creek is bubbling." Susan's words are full of air, as she gasps for breath.

Ray and Jackie look at each other.

"Doesn't the creek bubble sometimes in the spring?" Ray asks Jackie. "From the melt?"

"It's not the melt," says Susan. "There were dead frogs. And dead fish swirling in the eddy. Ray, you've got to come. Please, I know something is wrong."

"Don't leave me out of this," says Jackie. "I'm coming too."

When they get to the creek, the bubbles don't stop coming. Just as Sue said, there's a dead frog with a balloon belly, white, like the end of a fingernail. The creek has never done this, not since Ray can remember. Both Sue and Jackie stand at the bank, silent, alone in their thoughts.

"I'll be right back," he says and jumps in the truck.

He returns with a two-liter Diet Coke bottle he'd fished out of the recycling. He cuts the top third off the bottle and discards the rest. He wades into the creek with the homemade funnel and some matches. With the wide part of the funnel on the water, he lights a match and holds it at the mouth of the bottle. The flame shoots straight up. Ray's hands start to shake. He swears. He starts to sweat, his forehead creased and shiny. He feels like he is drowning though he's only thigh-deep. Then, somehow, he manages to light another match. This one flares up past his head. As quick as it lights, it dies.

Later that day, after they have left messages for the EPA and the DNR and the Fish and Wildlife people and the county commissioners, after Susan can't wait another minute for someone to call them back, she walks the ditch. The midday sun is high in the sky and heavy with heat. Susan finds that the noise in her brain is quiet. For the first time in weeks, her muscles go soft. The train is in the yard. She passes rusted barrels and screens and irrigation wheels and truck wheels and dented pipes, all the old equipment piled up for parts. She crosses the upper field, through the gate onto Johnson's, until she finds what she came for.

Behind a string of orange and yellow flags that rope off a sump is a row of well heads and a couple tanks the size of out-houses. A former section of alfalfa, it's been scraped to dirt as if with a giant spatula. The green water has an oil-slick shine. The wells hiss and clang. The windless day gives no relief.

In front of the Army-beige tanks is a sign. She reads it twice. Something hollow inside her fills with air. An old feeling, one she used to listen to. She needs a pen. Real reporters always carry a pen.

"What's doin', Sue?"

She spins to see Ray walking toward her, wind-burned and brown. In the weeks since he's been working cattle, his face has lost its puffiness, his hair has grown out; he looks less like a deputy, more like the boy he'd been. She waves, her hand is spastic. She is too excited, too glad to see him. She pins her

Love of the Land



arms to her sides.

"I was seeding alfalfa in the upper field and saw you leave the gate open; you all right?" He's been tracking her. Worried she's fragile as a leaf.

"I had to see all this." She nods at the mess of well heads.

"Place is the same, you know," he says, nodding beyond the well pad at Grass Mesa and the rough-cut mountains. From the fence line to the hills had been Stark land for all their growing up. "Look past all that and it's still real pretty."

Unthinking, she touches the wool of his work shirt and they stand there hinged to one another, quiet in their own lost thoughts.

Where does one story end and another start? Ray's dad sold this field to Johnson, the day after Ray's grandpa died, without asking Ray his opinion in the matter. Ray, out to spite his pacifist father, joined the Guard the next week. And then Johnson leased the mineral rights, and now 12 wells puncture the fields where Ray once rode horses into the wind.

Now there is a sign that Susan can't stop reading.

"You have any pen and paper?"

Ray digs a pencil and a receipt out of his jacket.

Her handwriting is bad. Shaky. She keeps writing.

Danger! Extremely Flammable. Long term repeated exposure may cause cancer, blood and nervous system damage. Contains benzene. Overexposure may cause eye, skin, or respiratory irritation or damage, and may cause headaches, dizziness, or other adverse nervous system effects or damage, including death.

"My arms are burning." Her T-shirt is thin. Her skin pale. "Ray, are your arms burning?"

Inside the house, she heads straight for the bathroom.

Including death. All the people in town who've died from cancer: Shorty's sister Trish who worked at Why Not Hair, Pastor Charlie, Millie Ramirez, Lydia Allen's mama, and then her daddy three months later, Kim Mobaldi, Sharon Haire, Liz Amos, Uncle Ellis, Dad.

The water is warm and she stands in the shower for a long time. Dad needed help with his bath at the end. His skin sagged. It was ashy and dry, like the skin of an old person. Make it stop, Susie honey. Give me all of them pills. He had said this as she drew the curtain around the tub. Needing help was not in his genetic code. Dad, you've got a fever. You're just loopy from the pain. You don't mean that.

Please.

There are so many things she would do different in life, but that part with him at the end — someone else would've done better. The water pours over her face, her arms. She stares at the showerhead and suddenly it strikes her: this is creek water. The tanks aren't at all far from the creek. Her skin starts to itch. She looks for bubbles but the flow's too strong. She shuts the shower off, steps out with shampoo still in her hair. She scratches until red welts form across her arms, her belly, her thighs. The tile floor is not cold enough to calm her down. □

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Contrarian Cowboy *A note to*

Mid-morning now, and hellishly hot, so I've donned a long-sleeved shirt and my grandfather's greasy, brow-beaten Resistol hat. He was the real deal, you know. Ran 500 head of cattle in the high desert country of southern Idaho. I mention this because you and I seem to share the acquaintance of stockmen and a fondness for moving through rough country on horseback. I don't know — perhaps rounding up herds of cows via equines gave us both the excuse to feel a greater sense of meaning and purpose out there, to deem our place in the desert as somehow more worthy than the tourists'. Neither of us ever wanted to just pass through.

Whatever the motives, I think that we both understand the "other side" of this public-lands debate — by which I mean the self-proclaimed old-timers, the rural folk. Which is, of course, not the other side at all — not even the likes of Cliven Bundy and the guys who took over the Malheur Wildlife Refuge in Oregon. Most of today's environmental groups won't agree, but you might, when I say that sometimes I vote libertarian to help break up the country's two-party gridlock, but also because I love the idea of what those guys did; I love the active resistance, the sticking it to institutions too large and lethargic to be effective. After all, the folks who have defied federal authority believe as you believed, that we might need the wild woolliness of the West "as a refuge from authoritarian government," and "as bases for guerilla warfare against tyranny."

The anti-federalist, Mormon part of me agrees with your words, their actions. But, for Bundy's kind, the land's not the thing either. It's another kind of buzz that has to do with big guns, big hats and big boots. It's not the lawlessness that gets me as much as heartlessness — the way the cows go starving and the land perishes from too many large and foreign beasts on it. It's not a thing we can afford. For me, it's a matter of degrees. My grandfather, the other ranchers I've moved cows for — none of them sits on the extreme and hostile end of the spectrum. Besides, there are so few independent ranch outfits remaining they are hardly the main problem. But I'll tell you what is:

I was invited to speak at a book club in Salt Lake City, my hometown. The hostess' directions took me up one of the city's seven canyons to a tall iron gate, which ran across the hillside for as far as I could see. On a keypad, I entered a security code and the gate rolled open to a razed hilltop lathered in huge, shiny new homes built from whole forests of trees, steel, hewed stone, concrete, granite, and marble. The gathering was to be held in such a structure, and when I found the right one I squeezed my Subaru between the megafauna — Ford Explosions and Land Rovers — all of which sported stickers that claimed allegiance to The Nature Conservancy or Sierra Club.

I entered the host's home, which may as well have been a ski lodge, so vast

and luxuriously

rustic-chic it was. A table displaying imported wine, olives, cheese, grapes and shrimp beckoned — items that traveled from farmers and vintners and fishermen to warehouses and then to the distributors, and then to Salt Lake storefronts. After these items were purchased, they were driven home — from the heart of the city to the McMansion atop this canyon. They were laid out next to recyclable paper plates, napkins and cutlery. A blue recycling bin stood proudly at table's end to collect what could be used, in some other fashion, again.

We filled our plates and glasses and gathered in a great room fit for kings and queens. We discussed my living in and writing about rural southern Utah, among people who hate that the Feds are in charge of lands they believe to be their backyards. At one point, a woman wrinkled her nose and said, "God, I hate all those backwoods rednecks down there. Their lifestyle is totally unsustainable."

The other book club members nodded and murmured in agreement.

I leaned into the fire at my back, a fire that should have been making my skin bead with sweat but instead left me lukewarm because the hearth was so absurdly large. I took in the impeccable hygiene, the curiously bright white teeth, the new hip clothes. I thought about my rural neighbors and my own ranching relatives. All of them lived in much, much smaller houses than this. They grew, raised or hunted nearly all their own food. Their cars and trucks were driven until there were 300,000 miles on the engines. They owned about two pairs of jeans and one pair of boots each, and they reused every piece of baling twine. Hardly ever did they use fuel to go on a "road trip," let alone commute to work or to a book club or fly in airplanes to exotic places. And the cattle they trucked to sale? They were sold to the supermarkets and restaurants the rest of us frequent, to serve as the main course for the paleo diets to which the good liberals prescribe — diets that burn way too much carbon, but, hey, they burn fat too — especially if we drive across town after work for a CrossFit class before heading back out to the suburbs to pump more protein into our systems so we are lean and chiseled and ready to head to the desert come Friday afternoon, where we'll camp, cook, poop and pump our bikes amid ancient grounds where the region's Native

Edward Abbey

Americans lived.

These good white liberals want monuments and wilderness to protect the places they recreate, to keep out companies that want to suck the fossil fuels out from under the sandstone. But the oil and gas will be burned by and large by them, to travel to Utah's public lands. And it's used by us — you in your big red Cadillac and me in my Toyota truck — although I've recently downgraded to a more fuel-efficient Subaru, the preferred method of transport that's most often frosted with bike, ski and boat racks for outdoor enthusiasts across the nation.

The land and those who live off it know this arrangement breeds no symbiosis. We all want to get to, and get off on, a body corralled and commodified. We are horses headed to the barn. Our orgasmic need for release and relief eclipses the fact that this is the living, breathing body of the Beloved — the naked desert that has been demarcated and delineated — ribbed, we believe, for our pleasure.

But you knew all this, even then — before Arches was paved and Moab became a monument to motors and muscles. You gave us warning. *Desert Solitaire* was another kind of red flag, waving wildly in the blinding, blasting wind through which we have failed to see our own tracks.

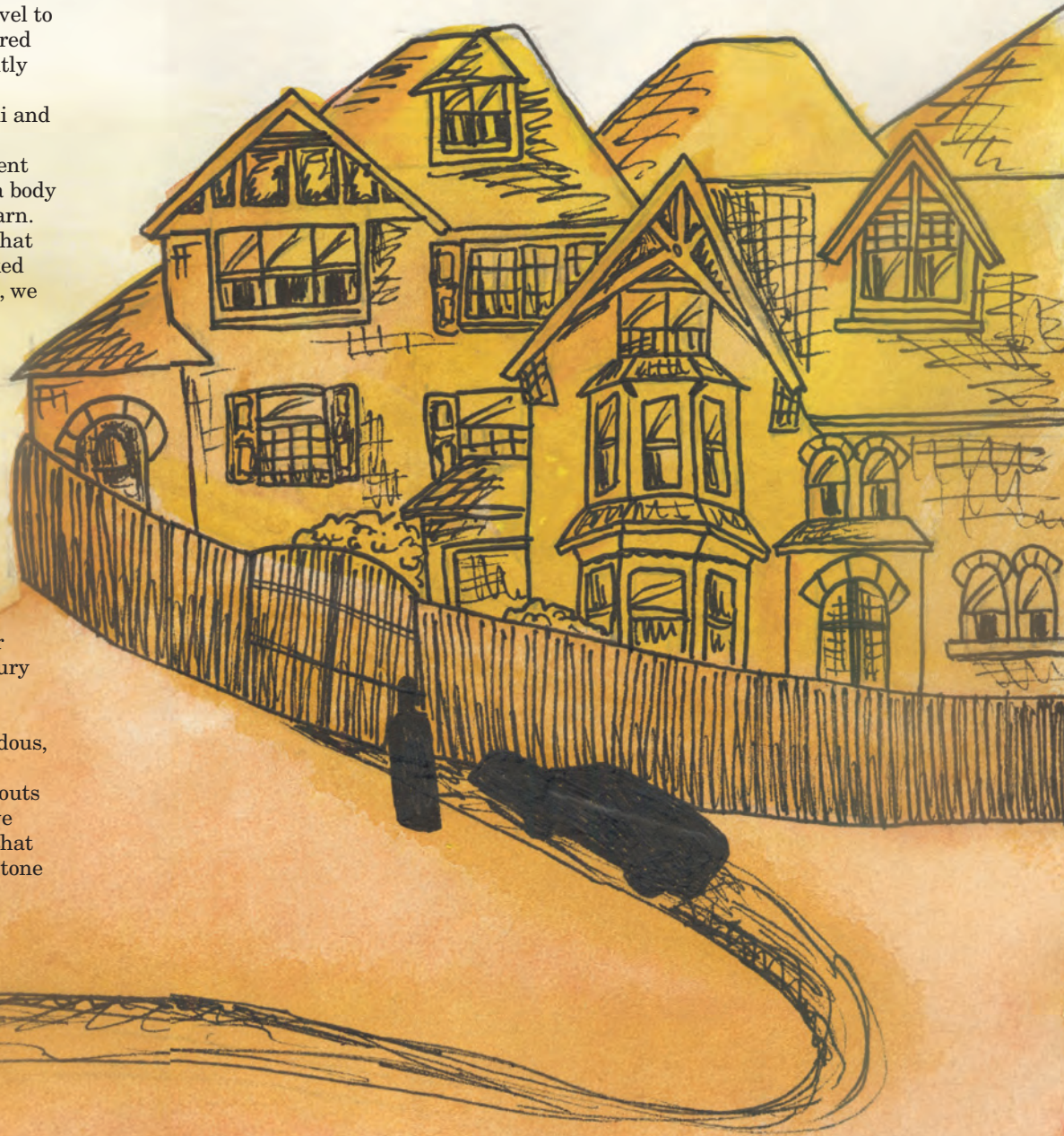
So now what? How has the land become beside the point, even as people go to such lengths there — to play on it, to make a living on it?

If we objectify, we can enjoy. To love any more deeply is to love in a way that devastates. As you said about the drowning of Glen Canyon, the most tragic of all Ophelias, "We dare not think about it for if we did we'd be eating our hearts, chewing our entrails, consuming ourselves in the fury of helpless rage. Of helpless outrage."

We are they.

The new adventure starts now. It takes place on hazardous, heartbreaking terrain, without the contagions of carbon.

No longer can we be voyeurs, catching from scenic pullouts mere glimpses of the wild, uneven territory of our collective unconscious. The hour at hand demands that we molt all that we want and believe we know. That we slither — belly to stone — into the dens and burrows of our souls. □



Excerpted from Amy Irvine's most recent book, *Desert Cabal: A New Season in the Wilderness* (Torrey House Press, November 2018).

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In *The Golden State*, identity and immigration collide

Lydia Kiesling's debut novel *The Golden State* is an energetic work of fiction that sharply comments on immigration, identity and modern-day motherhood. Set in California, the story follows 10 days in the life of its resilient protagonist, Daphne, who is fighting to hold her world together as everything around her crumbles.

Her husband, a native of Turkey, has had his green card revoked under dubious circumstances and is stranded half a world away. Two students from the university where Daphne works got into a car accident while overseas — on a study-abroad program she helped arrange — and one of them is dead. Thrown into an emotional abyss, Daphne acts on that most basic of human impulses, and flees. The opening line of the novel reveals her thinking:

“I am staring out the window of my office and thinking about death when I remember the way Paiute smells in the early morning in the summer before the sun burns the dew off the fescue.”

And so Daphne impulsively strides out of her office, retrieves her 16-month-old daughter, Honey, from daycare, and points her Oldsmobile northeast, toward the doublewide trailer she inherited from her parents in the high desert of Northern California. Unbeknownst to her, an anti-government secessionist movement is gaining steam in her family's hometown, and this already-overwhelmed woman is about to get caught up in the midst of yet more high-stakes drama.

Kiesling, the editor of the online literary website *The Millions*, brings a wry humor to this emotionally charged story. At her wit's end, for example, Daphne thinks about seeing her deported husband: “I am alone with our child whose first steps and first words you are missing and I sometime fantasize about meeting you at the airport with her and kissing you passionately and then throttling you until you die.”

Fair enough.

The book offers the reader a chance to compare the seemingly disparate cultures of Turkey, the emerging economy that is home to Daphne's husband, Engin, and California, a nation-state unto itself. The two places share more similarities than most Americans imagine: Both suffer from random acts of public violence against civilians, and both have leaders with autocratic tendencies.

“The whole trajectory of our marriage has been westward,” Daphne says. “It's true that in Turkey there is Erdo on the tyrant sultan and also that there are safety concerns of various kinds but the last incident was the woman from



Dagestan who bombed the police station and that was months ago and America is no picnic on that score what with roomfuls of murdered kindergarteners lying in their own blood. Oh God.”

And then, once Daphne arrives in Altavista, the heart of Paiute County, we meet her neighbor: Cindy Cooper. Cindy is a supporter of the State of Jefferson, a movement that believes that Northern California and southern Oregon should secede together and form their own separate state. Listening to her neighbors and family friends endorse secession, wallow in conspiracy theories and complain endlessly about government interference, Daphne thinks, aghast, “*This is California.*”

Daphne is shocked by the nativism and ignorance she finds in her family's community. Though they are kind to Daphne and her daughter, her neighbors espouse insular, xenophobic beliefs. They equate Islam with ISIS, believe that Barack Hussein Obama is a secret Muslim, and think that the United Nations has a secret agenda to seize control of their homesteads.

The truth is that California is a wide and diverse vessel that can hold many ideologies simultaneously. A pluralistic society can be home to both an American

wife and a deported Turkish husband, to a baby named Honey Mehmetoğlu and State of Jefferson secessionists who want to be left alone, to bureaucrats in Sacramento and Salem who send more services to the would-be free state of Jefferson than they receive revenue from.

In the midst of all the action, Kiesling carves out small spaces in the novel to describe the California high desert in gorgeous, loving prose.

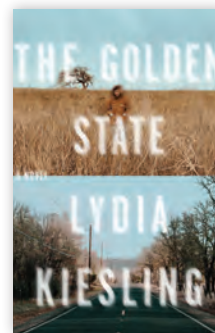
“The sky is a pallid, milky blue now, save a gray mass to the far north, with the shady apparition of summer rain high in the sky in the far distance,” Kiesling writes. “The valley is a balm after the ravages of town, a vast open view of soft-looking green grasses, the yellow sweep of hills moving up into low forested peaks at the basin's far reach. It's not verdant, not gentle, but it looks pretty good.”

In the end, Kiesling's novel reminds us that love and family are the only glue that can keep us together, particularly when all else seems lost. She also shows us that home is an emotional bond as well as a physical place, and that sometimes running away from our problems makes us miss the solution that was right there in front of us.

BY MARY SLOSSON

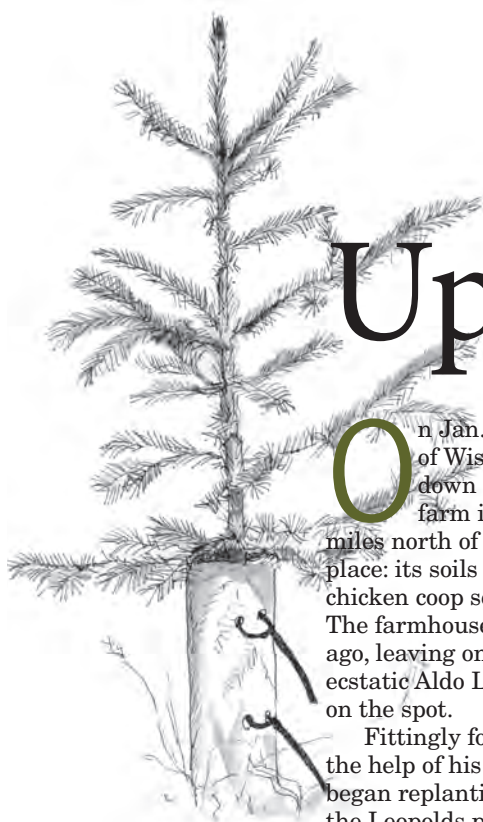
A car outside of a 2017 State of Jefferson meeting in Redding, California.

BROOKE WARREN/
HIGH COUNTRY NEWS



The Golden State: A Novel

Lydia Kiesling
304 pages, hardcover:
\$26.00
MCD, 2018



Updating Aldo

On Jan. 12, 1935, a University of Wisconsin professor bumped down a rutted trail to a derelict farm in Sauk County, some 50 miles north of Madison. It was a forlorn place: its soils sandy, its elms straggly, its chicken coop sedimented with manure. The farmhouse had burned down ages ago, leaving only a foundation. An ecstatic Aldo Leopold decided to lease it on the spot.

Fittingly for a forester, Leopold, with the help of his bemused family, quickly began replanting the property. In 1936, the Leopolds planted a thousand white pines and a thousand reds, followed the next year by 3,000 more pines. In 1938, according to Curt Meine, Leopold's biographer, the litany included "100 white pines, 500 red pines, 500 jack pines, 500 red oaks, 50 tamaracks, 50 red cedars," and many more dogwoods, hazels and maples. Leopold planted shrubs like juneberry and raspberry, seeded wildflowers such as trillium and lady slippers, and laid prairie sod. He planted until, quite literally, the day he died: The morning before his fatal heart attack in 1948, he tucked 100 pines into their earthy beds.

Fifty-six years later, Leopold's granddaughter, Susan Leopold Freeman, and her husband, Scott Freeman, followed in the footsteps of their famous forebear, purchasing 18 acres of floodplain, pasture and woodland astride a salmon stream on Washington's Olympic Peninsula. Tarboo Creek had been nearly as abused as the Wisconsin farm: Previous landowners had straightened its course, drained its wetlands and allowed Himalayan blackberry to run rampant. The watercourse "looked like an open wound," its flow "shooting through a steep-sided, arrow-straight ditch, excavating the bottom as it went." Some stretches had eroded so badly that a person could stand in the streambed and see nothing but towering cutbanks.

Rehabilitating Tarboo Creek became the Freemans' *raison d'être*. Scott and Susan, in cooperation with a nonprofit called the Northwest Watershed Institute and a legion of volunteers, recontoured the stream's course, replanted its floodplain, and beat back invasive vegetation. As the stream revived, its non-human dependents returned: otters,

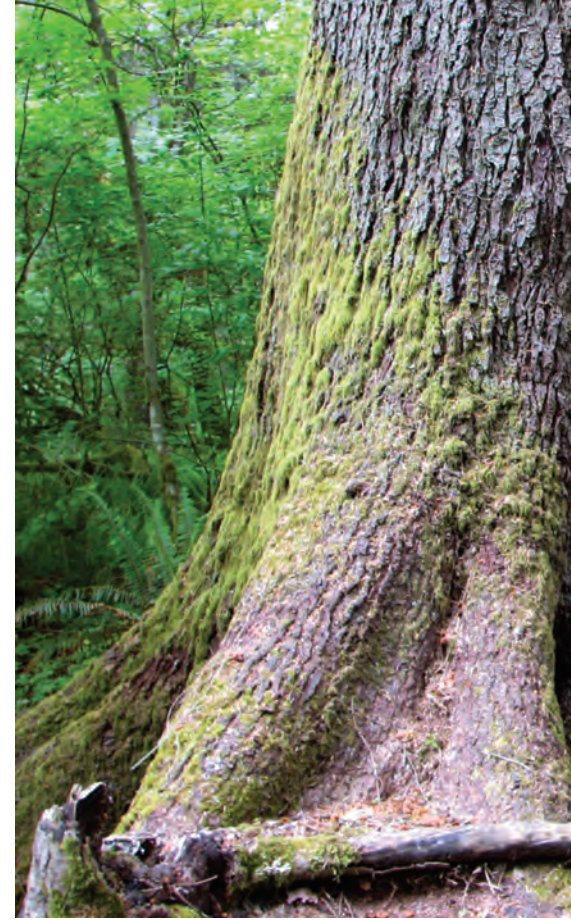
beavers, eagles, cougars. One afternoon, the couple watched a female salmon "roll to one side, arch herself into a U, and beat her tail like a hoe against the rocks" as she dug out her nest.

Saving Tarboo Creek, a new book authored by Scott and illustrated by Susan, chronicles the family's intimate relationship with their creek, its wildlife and each other. Much like *A Sand County Almanac*, Aldo Leopold's classic meditation on humanity's relationship with land, it packs several parallel stories into a slim volume. Its narrative is a braided stream: a guide to Northwestern ecosystems, a playbook for restoration, an ode to observation and a lament for the earth. Just as Leopold drew a core tenet of ecological thought from the sandy soil of a ruined farm, *Saving Tarboo Creek* strives, too, to transcend itself — to situate a humble stream within a global account of environmental degradation and alienation. Nearly seven decades after *Sand County* attempted to reconnect people with the world they were losing, *Tarboo Creek* suggests that the rifts have only become harder to bridge.



One evening during the infernally hot and smoky season that Northwesterners used to call the month of August, the Freemans and I wandered along Tarboo Creek, stepping over ropy mink scat on the way. The restored stream, the width of a standing broadjump, was cold and sinuous, spanned by logs anchored in the banks. We were too early to witness the autumn arrival of coho, but their finger-length fry skittered in every hole.

"It's magic, seeing these giant beasts return to this tiny stream," Scott said.



He turned to his wife for confirmation, only to find that Susan had fallen back to yank invasive bittersweet. "I'm coming," she hollered. "That's why we get along so well," he told me. "She can't stop pulling weeds."

Freeman, a biology lecturer at the University of Washington, has the gangling gait of a former basketball player and the goofy enthusiasm of your favorite science teacher; Susan counters with an artist's serenity and the patience of a piano teacher, her own vocations. The couple met in 1980 during fellowships at the Leopold Memorial Reserve in Wisconsin; graduate school took them to Seattle, where they eventually settled. In the early 2000s, eager to advance the Leopold legacy, they began searching Puget Sound for ecological fixer-uppers. When they stumbled across the Tarboo Creek property, it had sat neglected for four years. The Northwest Watershed Institute, which had secured a grant to begin repairing the place, needed a landowner to help steward the project. Its director was skeptical of the Freemans' intentions until Scott let slip that the family had been practicing restoration since the 1930s. "I said, 'Have you heard of a guy named Aldo Leopold?'" Freeman recalled. "And I just heard the phone drop."

Stream restoration began that summer. The overriding goal was, as Freeman puts it in *Saving Tarboo Creek*, to "make crooked that which was straight." An excavator gouged a meandering channel from the dry floodplain and layered its bed with gravel; then, using plastic sheeting and sandbags, the Freemans diked the old ditch, guiding the stream into the



Saving Tarboo Creek
Scott Freeman, with illustrations by Susan Leopold Freeman
224 pages, hardcover: \$25.95.
Timber Press, 2018.



renowned plant physiologist, passed away in 2009, content to have witnessed one more Leopold-led project. “He was so proud of this place.”

Saving Tarboo Creek takes the reader deep into the nitty-gritty of reforestation and remeandering. But it also frequently zooms out, from local restoration to planetary crisis. A chapter covering the comeback of the local beavers segues into a history of the global extinction crisis. The couple’s battles against blackberry become a portal into avian malaria, cheatgrass and other pernicious invasives. The annual return of salmon inspires a discourse on overfishing. For the ecoliterate, these digressions will be well-trod ground; still, they’re deft and deeply felt. They mimic, yet again, *A Sand County Almanac*, whose notes on geese, grouse and meadow mice cede to a series of sagacious essays: the mournful “Escudilla,” the indignant “Cheat Takes Over,” the timeless “Thinking Like a Mountain.” Like William Blake, Leopold saw the world in a grain of sand. His heirs, the Freemans, glimpse it in a watercourse.

We remember Aldo Leopold best today for his *land ethic* — the idea that we have a moral responsibility to treat the non-human world with respect and decency. Yet the notion of recasting *Homo sapiens* as “member of a biotic team” was not immaculately conceived in the mind of an armchair philosopher. Rather, it emerged from backbreaking mornings spent bent over a shovel, an ideology written in sweat. Leopold’s land ethic is not just an abstract thought pattern — it is a prescription for restoration ecology.

Likewise, the Freemans’ work on the Olympic Peninsula springs from their own code, one centered around leading a “natural life, ecological in outlook and practice” — attuned to the timing of bird migrations and wildflower blooms, impervious to materialism, active in conservation. More than anything, a

natural life is one embedded within an ecosystem; to lead one is to be “part of a community—to belong to something larger than yourself and participate in it.” There is valor in weed-pulling and pleasure in tree-planting. The message is even implicit in the book’s art: Where Charles Schwartz’s illustrations for *A Sand County Almanac* captured pheasants and muskrats, Susan Leopold Freeman’s unpretentious drawings depict the instruments through which humans join their labor with nature: a bucket, a shovel, a pair of gloves.

Of course, our biggest problems can’t be solved with hand tools. As I strolled Tarboo Creek with the Freemans, we walked under an eerie white sky, the sun reduced to an angry red eye by wildfire smoke. Climate change defies the land ethic: Stream restoration hasn’t prevented Tarboo Creek’s salmon from declining, the victims of warm ocean temperatures. What’s the use of fixing a tiny patch of land in the face of a global crisis? *Saving Tarboo Creek* is an optimistic book, sometimes to the point of straining credulity; its hope that global warming will be tackled through an “expression of public will,” for instance, is at odds with polls suggesting that Americans still — *still!* — consider climate change a vague and distant threat. But the Freemans seemed more discouraged in person than on the page. “It’s too big for us,” Scott admitted to me sadly.

So why bother? Restoration, in *Saving Tarboo Creek*, is a fundamentally spiritual practice, as salutary to the heart as to the earth, valuable for its ability to buffer its practitioners against isolation, anomie and the malignancy of the internet. Planting trees and remeandering streams is a way to reclaim agency in a social milieu designed to make us feel powerless, to heal a world of personal wounds as well as environmental ones. Recently, the couple counted the friends and family members who’d pitched in on their property, and came up with more than 80 names. “One of the most surprising things is that people *want* to be out in the mud and the rain,” Susan said.

We wandered through the reforested pasture, the Freemans pointing out all the ways Tarboo Creek remained degraded despite 14 years of restoration — the ubiquitous bittersweet, the deer scars afflicting the cottonwood saplings, the tip weevil stunting the spruce. They seemed almost giddy. The work would be lifelong, which was how they wanted it.

“People always ask us, ‘When will you be done?’” Susan said as she trampled another invader, a stand of reed canary grass.

“Our answer is never,” Scott added. “And that’s the point.”

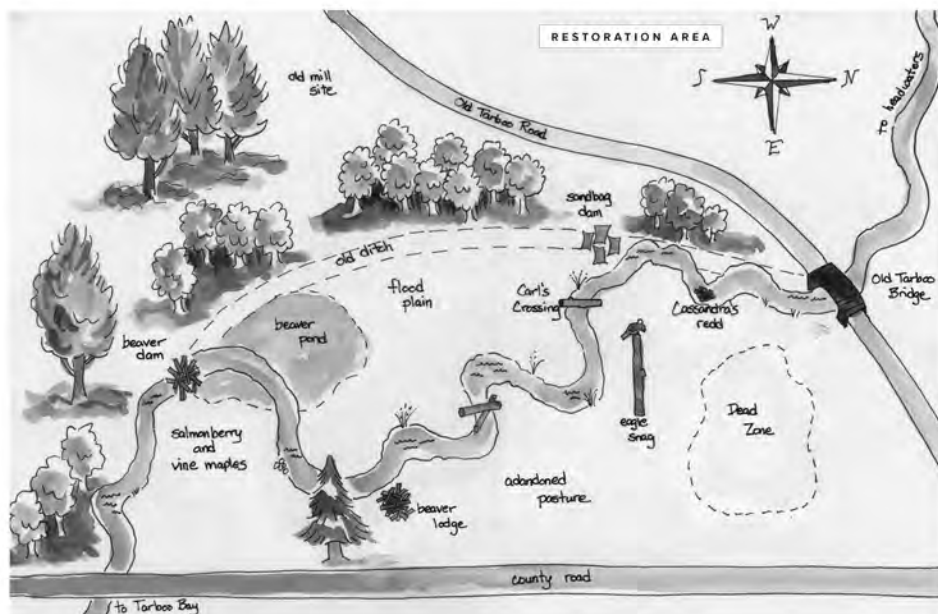
◀ **Scott Freeman and Susan Leopold Freeman study a tree on the property they’re restoring, in the Aldo Leopold tradition, on Washington’s Olympic Peninsula.** COURTESY THE FREEMAN-LEOPOLD FAMILY



SUSAN LEOPOLD FREEMAN ILLUSTRATIONS FROM SAVING TARBOO CREEK

artificial channel. Witnessing Tarboo Creek inundate its new, leisurely course, Freeman writes, was “like watching an innocent man walk out of prison, exonerated, after 35 years.”

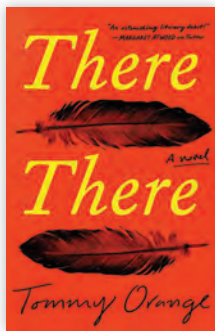
The Freemans, in true Leopoldian fashion, next turned to reforestation. In the past 18 years, they have planted more than 10,000 trees, from redcedar to madrone, Sitka spruce to beaked hazelnut. Along the creekbank, we were shaded by 14-year-old alders taller than three-story homes. Whenever Susan’s father, Carl Leopold, the fourth of Aldo and Estella’s five children, visited the property, he was swept by nostalgia. Examining the plucky hemlocks and firs “was one of the things that made him happiest,” Susan told me. Carl, a



BY BEN GOLDFARB

Leaving their homes and places of worship behind changed countless aspects of their lives, but Natives eventually left their cultural stamp on the cities, and the cities left marks on them.

THE URBAN INDIGENOUS EXPERIENCE



There There: A Novel
Tommy Orange
394 pages, hardcover:
\$25.95.
Knopf, 2018.

Although the Native literary canon is wide in scope, relatively few Indigenous writers have tackled what it means to be Native American in an urban environment. Set in Oakland, California, and told through the eyes of a dozen Indigenous characters, Tommy Orange's debut novel, *There There*, forces the reader to confront not just everyday casual racism, but also the misrepresentation of Natives in popular culture, the pain of missing legacies and the muffled hum of an ugly history, all against the backdrop of a thriving, pulsing city.

"An Urban Indian belongs to the city, and cities belong to the earth," Orange writes in the prologue. Recognizing the rift between Native culture and life in a metropolis, he asks, why can't Natives revere the city like they revere the earth?

"Buildings freeways, cars — are these not of the earth? Were they shipped in from Mars, the moon? Is it because they're processed, manufactured, or that we handle them? Are we so different?"

Many of Orange's characters ended up in Oakland due to the federal government's Indian relocation efforts, most notably in the 1950s, when it sought to dissolve tribal governments by offering to move tribal members into larger cities across the country. Although the move was intended to encourage assimilation, Orange told me recently, a lot of people saw it as a chance to start a new life.

Leaving their homes and places of worship behind changed the lives of those people in countless ways, but Natives eventually left their cultural stamp on the city, even as the city left its marks on them. Yet the old way of life still tugs

at many of Orange's characters, beckoning them to learn more.

"Part of the point of the book is that we don't necessarily know (where we came from)," Orange said. "And sometimes learning about what exactly all the language is, and the history, is a privilege. If you're just surviving, there's not history lessons, there's not an official way to learn your culture."

There There is a polyphonic novel, intertwining the stories of several urban Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians, whose lives collide at a powwow robbery. Many of the characters are also woven together by another common thread: their search for a true identity, as they're torn between the influence of the city and their Native heritage.

Take Tony Loneman, a 20-something Cheyenne who participates in the powwow robbery scheme. His ancestry is little more than a vague recollection, until Maxine, the Cheyenne woman he lives with and helps take care of, begins to make him learn it when he's not out riding his bike through the Oakland neighborhoods listening to MF Doom and making drug deals.

"Maxine makes me read her Indian stuff that I don't always get, I like it though because when I do get it, I get it way down at that place where it hurts but feels better because you feel it, something you couldn't feel before reading it, that makes you feel less alone, and like it's not gonna hurt as much anymore."

While he was developing the novel, Orange worked with Native youth through an Indian health center in Oakland. He taught the kids how to capture

the stories of their elders on film and edit together the narratives. He realized how many of these stories, just like his own, weren't being told, or didn't exist in popular culture. Orange wanted to write a new story, one in which other Natives could see themselves, a truly urban Native novel. And he succeeded.

Orange told me that each of his characters reflects him in some way, whether through their experiences, personal struggles or environmental surroundings. His life is glimpsed in characters like aspiring documentarian Dene Oxendene, with his sharp criticisms of the way Natives are represented and his desire to set people straight. And Orville Red Feather, the adolescent who sneaks away from his Cheyenne brothers to try on the powwow regalia he finds tucked away in a closet, squirming in front of the mirror in its ill-fitting pieces. And Blue, whose Oakland classmates used anti-Hispanic slurs to denigrate her because they didn't realize that Native Americans still existed. The novel is very much shaped by Orange's own life as an urban Native, and he says he's been surprised to see such a wide, non-Native audience respond so eagerly.

"I think there's something about the universality of specificity, why it's connecting to so many maybe is related to how specific it is," he said. Natives are inextricably linked to this country's foundation, he said, and "that actual story and how it ties into people's personal narratives of what it means to be an American, it has to include Native people."

BY GRAHAM LEE BREWER



VIEWS OF PAIN

ILLUSTRATION BY RAN ZHENG

AND BEAUTY

The promo materials for Lydia Millet's jarring new collection of short stories, *Fight No More*, say that the "12 interlocking stories set in Los Angeles describe a broken family through the homes they inhabit" and the work "explores what it means to be home."

They got the number of stories right, and the setting, and the broken family theme. But these interlocking stories follow the individuals not through their homes, but rather the real estate they inhabit, and the cars they drive. This is, after all, Los Angeles in the present-day USA, where — in Millet's telling — the only real home is our phone's home screen, we occupy commodities that are easily "flipped" or abruptly foreclosed upon, and we spend the bulk of our time in a state of transience, watching from behind a windshield as our lives rush by.

By delving into the intimate, mundane details of the lives of a dozen characters, Millet presents us with a sort of exposé of the essence of L.A. — which is itself, in many ways, the apotheosis of the urban West.

In this way, *Fight No More* reminded me of the works of Raymond Carver, that master of the Western short story. The Arizona-based Millet, a Pulitzer finalist, has a similarly twisted view of the world, with a quirkier sensibility and not quite so much cheap gin. Like Carver, she has a knack for inhabiting the people she writes about, giving the reader a sense of place and the zeitgeist through her characters' eyes. This can be an uncomfortable, at times almost suffocating experience, especially

when the character lacks introspection or self-awareness. That is certainly the case when we ride along with Pete, the sleaziest of a cast of substandard men and the main character of "I Can't Go On," as he coerces his teenaged stepdaughter, Lexie, into having sex. He succeeds — then has a fatal heart attack.

On the other hand, Aleska, an elderly Holocaust survivor-turned-scholar of the aesthetics of fascism, may be a bit too introspective for comfort — she gives us a clear-eyed view of our modern society, blemishes and all. This is how she remembers her late husband, for example: "Jake had liked to walk, could walk for hours and never get tired. Lived in California for decades but didn't get used to cars. Fitting that he chose a car to die in, fitting that he chose gas. ... He hated the American way of thought that said all things could be repaired, all things surmounted by a trick of attitude. History is trivial in this country, he said. Forgetting is the way to bliss. Ignorance is a badge of honor."

Yes, Aleska had thought, in response, but, "Look what it gives them, Jake. ... They're always beginning. You begin again every day, when you have almost no memory. It's a country of phoenixes!"

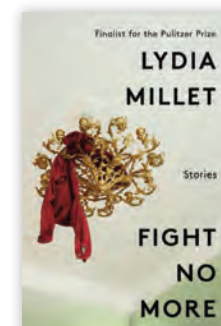
These distinctly Western-style phoenixes populate Millet's stories as she explores this legendary land of reinvention. There's 17-year-old Jeremy, who is "tall and pimply and rangy, with the ass-crack-revealing jeans and an addiction to pot and masturbation." After trying to sabotage the sale of his broken family's home with a lewd trick, he decides to start acting

with "dignity" — and succeeds. Or Lexie, whom we're introduced to as a "blond chick from Carpinteria" whom Jeremy ogles on her pay-per-view porn website, and who escapes from her dysfunctional world to begin anew. Even Nina, at the insistence of her sister Marnie, half-heartedly attends a self-help seminar the promises to "redefine your future in three days."

Yet this knack for reinvention, as uplifting as it seems, is sometimes vacuous. There are still the men who ditch their wives and lives for much younger women, trading in the old for the new, as if people and relationships are nothing more than real estate there for "flipping." And, yes, even homes are born again, over and over again, as they are bought and sold with the flick of a pen. "But this was only a home, only her house," Aleska thinks, as she packs up a few boxes of belongings to move into her son's backyard guest cottage, "and even before she died the whole place would be taken apart methodically, no sentiment wasted."

It's a concise summation of this collection of stories: No sentiment wasted. There's no emotional puffery, no nostalgia, just a hard-edged view of life, love, loss and pain and beauty, all playing out in a freedom-giving emptiness: "Here a woman in a Range Rover, a man in a Porsche, revving, revving," Aleska observes as she walks through her son's upper-class neighborhood. "She passed each house in turn, each gate, each privacy hedge or showy rock garden, but as she passed them she also passed nothing at all. ..."

BY JONATHAN THOMPSON



Fight No More: Stories

Lydia Millet
224 pages, hardcover:
\$24.95.
W. W. Norton &
Company, 2018.



A photographic merge that illustrates a day of traffic in what is known as “Heli Alley.” Each helicopter and boat represent one trip that crossed the camera’s lens, totaling 363 helicopter flights in eight hours. PETE MCBRIDE

Picturing grandeur



The Grand Canyon: Between River and Rim

Pete McBride with Kevin Fedarko and Hampton Sides
224 pages,
hardcover: \$50.
Rizzoli, 2018.



Bears Ears: Views from a Sacred Land

Stephen E. Storm with Rebecca Robinson and Joy Harjo
240 pages,
hardcover: \$40.
George F. Thompson Publishing, 2018.

Nowadays, most of the Colorado Plateau’s national park or monument gateway-communities boast their own landscape photographers. Usually the primary one is a man, who owns a gallery there and specializes in large-format, highly processed prints. Promising wholeness and wholesomeness, postcard picturesqueness translates nicely into dollars, especially during troubled times.

Some critics consider the idealized scenes — showcased through calendars, magazines, ads, documentaries and NGO websites — mere “Nature porn.” Such images, they object, *always* suggest wildlands that are healthy, largely intact, and free of intrusion or degradation. Too many photographers still work under romantic biases, in the tradition of 19th-century painters like Albert Bierstadt or Thomas Moran. Detractors see set pieces of waterfalls, rock formations, cloud-lined vistas, light ricocheting from canyon walls, and portraits of shy desert creatures more as soothing anodyne than actual art, the kind of images that anesthetize any engagement required of us. Glossy publications attract busloads of visitors to already-overcrowded parks. Genre proponents, conversely, feel that images of soul-stirring sublimity promote a desire to protect what is left, or at least to financially support those who try to.

Landscape pictorials as a means to stoke political activism are a venerable tradition. Photography supported Western preservation campaigns, from Ansel

Adam’s glorification of Yosemite Valley to Eliot Porter’s *The Place No One Knew* (1963), which the Sierra Club publicized to fight Glen Canyon Dam. The former Sierra Club director Dave Brower’s brainchild, *This Is Dinosaur* (1955), rallied public opinion against building Echo Park Dam inside that national monument. Two recent “coffee-table” books about Southwestern desert enclaves reaffirm this combative heritage.

The Grand Canyon by self-taught Colorado photographer and filmmaker Pete McBride sprang from his 2015 expedition with Kevin Fedarko (author of *The Emerald Mile*): The two men backpacked 750-plus, mostly trail-less miles from Lees Ferry to Grand Wash Cliffs. Their book is meant as “a visual requiem for those gems that are now in the process of being discarded.” Much to his credit, McBride does not shy from “non-traditional” motifs that challenge viewer expectations: tangled fence-wire, South Rim light pollution, Havasupai protesters, or a composite of jetboats and choppers clogging the river section called “Heli Alley.” “From every point on the compass, from the air above as well as the ground below, the integrity of the Grand Canyon is under threat from people seeking to profit from its wonders,” Fedarko writes in the introduction. Encroaching uranium mines, the din from sightseeing flights, and the proposed 10,000-visitors-per-day Escalade cable tramway and resort (which has been, for now, rejected) are duly men-

tioned. The overall impression, however — reinforced by grit-and-dirt adventure photography — is that the Grand Canyon still offers much-needed relief and refuge, and not just to *Homo sapiens*.

Where *The Grand Canyon* impresses with intimate below-the-rim vignettes, *Bears Ears* brims with minimalist, wide-angle “architectural” takes. Stephen Storm, a longtime research astronomer and the photographer behind *Bears Ears*, belongs in the more formal, somewhat academic Fine Arts camp. In previous projects, Storm’s photos complemented poetry, and his publisher’s advisers include renowned cultural critic, curator, and landscape theorist Lucy Lippard. Storm’s compositions frequently favor sky above low-slung horizon lines, which along with the canyons’ Martian-red warp lend an otherworldly quality to the images. Humans or artifacts appear as afterthoughts, and angles often are bird’s-eye views, presenting sights unknown to people who lived here before the advent of aircraft. Though they paint too barren a picture of this region, Storm’s panoramas and close-ups of textures and structural elements will delight geology buffs and abstract art lovers. The book’s poem by Mvskoke Nation (Oklahoma) poet Joy Harjo is both a moving prayer to Shash Jaa (“Bears Ears”), and a trenchant warning.

Already reduced in acreage by the current administration, Storm’s “drama of expansive landscapes and skies” remains a target of resource extraction and development, as well as of pothunting and other vandalism. Law enforcement remains spotty.

In the struggle to save treasured places, some pictures are worth more than a thousand words and, as neural shortcuts, appeal directly to emotion. John Wesley Powell agreed, bringing photographers on his own expeditions: “The wonders of the Grand Canyon cannot be adequately represented in symbols of speech, nor by speech itself.” As rationalistic, economical and ecological arguments for conservation alone seem to fail, aesthetic and “spiritual” motives must come to their aid. Engaged landscape photography — augmented by films and articles, as were the Sierra Club books — can help fill that void. Celebrating “the foresight of visionary leaders” — Roosevelt’s in 1908, and Obama’s in 2016 — both new folios are worth their price. In different ways, both break the mold of landscape photography books as simply exercises in prettiness, building on their predecessors’ stylistic repertoire.

BY MICHAEL ENGELHARD



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Timber framer Bodie Johansson chisels out floor joist housings in the Handcrafted Log & Timber yard in Ridgway, Colorado. **BLAKE GORDON** © 2018 Patagonia, Inc.



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ALASKA

Visitors to Alaska's Katmai National Park love watching burly brown bears gorge themselves on sockeye salmon. The grizzlies that hang out at Brooks Falls are huge and wet, and every week they grow visibly bigger, some adding up to 90 pounds in a day. That's so they can snooze without eating through five months of hibernation, during which they lose about one-third of their body weight. The annual feeding frenzy is an ideal opportunity to educate people about bears, so staffers at the park decided four years ago to host an annual "Fat Bear" contest, in which the public votes for the grizzly that appears to have gained the most humongous girth. Starting in June, 12 bears were photographed regularly, and by late fall two of the most corpulent — each weighing something over 1,000 pounds — were left vying for the "year's most fabulous flab." Now, the winner in this year's great fatness face-off has been announced: Bear 409, a "gigantic gal with a marvelous muffin top." Though runner-up Bear 747 was a strong competitor (described as "blimpy," with a belly that "barely has clearance to the ground"), Bear 409 won the public's heart, pulling in 7,000 likes on social media, compared with her rival's 3,000. Bear 409 also boasted formidable feminist credentials, being "a single mom trying to make it in the wild," as one woman commented on Facebook. "She deserves it ... has had four multiple-birth litters and raised her cubs to maturity. About time a female bear won!" Another fan swore: "I would die for Bear 409." The park is home to some 2,200 brown bears — the most in the world, officials say — and given its many millions of migrating fish, said park ranger Andrew LaValle, "If you're gonna be a bear, Katmai National Park is a good place to be one." Another advantage: It has "Bear Cams," so that, as writer Ruben Kimmelman of Northwest Public Broadcasting says, diehard bear aficionados can tune in to see the animals living off the fat of the land.

MONTANA

Meanwhile, in northern Montana, a 900-pound male grizzly became a problem after he wan-



NEVADA The intersection of mares and Mustang. HAROLD ROY MILLER

dered into an open garage in a Hutterite community and refused to leave. "He fell asleep right in the corner," reports the *Billings Gazette*. No amount of yelling, mace or honking could persuade him to decamp. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks was called in, and staffers decided to tranquilize the bear. That turned out to be the easy part; the hard part was moving it. Six people had to be enlisted to push a tarp underneath the snoring grizzly and then hoist him into a cage. When he awoke, the bear was released near East Glacier.

UTAH

Jim Dabakis is a rarity in Utah, a Democratic state senator. He leaves office Dec. 31, but before he packed up, as an example to his fellow legislators, he decided to publicly try marijuana for the first time. That's because legalizing medical marijuana is on the Utah ballot this November, and state lawmakers have already announced plans for enacting restrictions if it passes. So Dabakis travelled to Nevada, where recreational pot is legal, and bought a gummy bear infused with edible marijuana. He filmed the entire taste test, and you can watch Dabakis gnaw the forbidden fruit on *Esquire* magazine's website.

His conclusion: "I think the reefer madness crowd — you guys you need to try it. It's not that big a deal."

THE MIDWEST

Nebraska's last tourism slogan — "Visit Nebraska, Visit Nice" — just didn't do it, reports the *Washington Post*. For the last four years, the state has come in dead last on a list of states that tourists seek out. So its latest slogan, created for \$450,000 by a Colorado firm, is aimed at people who enjoy the outdoors but want a stress-free and somewhat quirky vacation. "Nebraska: Honestly, it's not for everyone" is the new slogan, and this self-deprecating approach might just make it a winner. National Public Radio's Scott Simon was so taken he said, "I've already packed my bag." One Nebraskan thought his own suggestion packed

even more punch: "Nebraska: We don't want to be here, either."

IDAHO

Big game hunter Blake Fischer is no longer a member of the Idaho Fish and Game Commission; he resigned after bragging on email to 125 friends that he'd happily slaughtered dozens of animals in Namibia. The emails, which became public, included a picture of Fischer stepping on the neck of the giraffe he'd just killed, while another focused on the bloody remains of an entire family of baboons, reports the *Idaho Statesman*. Public condemnation came quickly, and Fischer's response — "I didn't do anything illegal" — failed to satisfy. In his resignation letter to the governor, Fischer said his hunting photos failed to "display an important level of sportsmanship and respect for animals I harvested."

WEB EXTRA For more from Heard around the West, see hcn.org.

Tips and photos of Western oddities are appreciated and often shared in this column. Write betsym@hcn.org or tag photos #heardaroundthewest on Instagram.



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