

Access to Life. Aperture, dist. by D.A.P. This collection of photographs is not only a moving celebration of the resilience of the human spirit in the face of AIDS but also a somber reminder that the disease has yet to be conquered. Eight photojournalists follow 30 individuals in nine countries to document the positive effects of antiretroviral treatments and to show what happens when treatment comes too late.

Bartlett, Allison Hoover. **The Man Who Loved Books Too Much: The True Story of a Thief, a Detective, and a World of Literary Obsession.** Riverhead: Penguin Group. Journalist Bartlett quickly learned not to judge a book by its contents—but its cover—after embarking on a mission to investigate the true story of one man whose love of rare books drove him to steal \$100,000 worth of volumes in California and another who would stop at nothing to catch the thief. A compulsively readable tale as reported to Bartlett by both men.

Bate, Jonathan. **Soul of the Age: A Biography of the Mind of William Shakespeare.** Random. Another Shakespeare biography? In fact, Bate gives us something different, using the Bard's own "Seven Ages of Man" speech from *As You Like It* to envision him as an infant, a school boy, a lover, a soldier, a justice, a pantaloon, and an old man entering "oblivion." The result is a fresh new way to look at Shakespeare and a welcome reminder of what literary biography can still do.

Bronson, Po & Ashley Merryman. **NurtureShock: New Thinking About Children.** Twelve: Hachette Book Group. Journalists Bronson (*What Should I Do with My Life?*) and Merryman turn the child-rearing genre on its head by educating rather than alarming information-overloaded parents. Expanding on their award-winning article for *New York* magazine, they clearly and concisely dispel myths about childhood development, drawing on a body of convincing research. An eye-opener in the best sense. (305.231)

Byatt, A.S. **The Children's Book.** Knopf. Stories spill forth from Byatt's magisterial new work, and not just the stories told by main character Olive Wellwood, a children's writer. Opening in a late 1800s England rife with new ideas and rushing inexorably toward World War I, this work relates linked events in the lives of Olive and her friends and family in rich, breathtakingly acute prose. (F)

Dexter, Pete. **Spooner.** Grand Central. Known for his tough-guy prose, Dexter here turns in something different: a wry and generous autobiographical tale about a wayward young man and the stepfather who stands by him, regardless. No, it's not sentimental, just a strong and sensitive work marking a new direction for the author. (F)

Farmelo, Graham. **The Strangest Man: The Hidden Life of Paul Dirac, Mystic of the Atom**. Basic Bks: Perseus. While not the most eccentric of mid-20th-century physicists, Paul Dirac was among the most demure, private, and mysterious. He also was beset by tragedy, and Farmelo's moving biography proposes some novel insights into what shaped him as a man and a scientist.

Flanagan, Richard. **Wanting**. Atlantic Monthly. Acclaimed Australian author Flanagan draws on the tragic history of Tasmania's aboriginal people, polar explorer Sir John Franklin's ill-fated final expedition, and Charles Dickens's unhappy marriage to meditate on the devastation wrought by people convinced that repressing their "wants," or desires, is the foundation of civilization. Elegant and astonishing.

Harding, Paul. **Tinkers**. Bellevue Literary. As he lies dying, surrounded by his family, an old man recalls his life as a tinker in hardscrabble New England—and the result is quietly dazzling magic. A tinker in his own right, debut novelist Harding puts together a seamless work that gets right to the heart of a life determinedly lived. Both simple and stunning.

Harris, J. William. **The Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah: A Free Black Man's Encounter with Liberty**. Yale Univ. In 1775, Thomas Jeremiah, a free black man in Charleston, SC, was accused of stirring up a slave insurrection and was subsequently hanged and burned. Harris mines contemporary sources to place Jeremiah within the story of high-minded Charleston aristocrats who stood firmly for liberty from Great Britain while estimating Jeremiah's rights at nil. Thus does Harris ask us to reckon with the dark realities of Colonial America's sense of liberty. Meticulously researched and absolutely unforgettable.

Heller, Anne C. **Ayn Rand and the World She Made**. Nan A. Talese: Doubleday "Russian by both birth and temperament" but "born an American in spirit," Ayn Rand spent most of her intellectual life unfalteringly defending laissez-faire capitalism. If we perceive Rand as the sum of her unique experiences—and editor/journalist Heller goes to great lengths to describe just how exceptional they were—we begin to appreciate Rand as an incomparable thinker, even if we don't support her ideas. (B)

Holmes, Richard. **The Age of Wonder: How the Romantic Generation Discovered the Beauty and Terror of Science**. Pantheon. Romanticism in Britain at the end of the 18th century is mostly thought of as an artistic, literary, and intellectual movement. But, beginning with botanist Joseph Bank's life-changing experiences in Tahiti, Holmes shows us a marvelous "relay race of scientific stories," revealing how the second scientific revolution was catalyst to the era's sense of wonder. (509.41)

Holroyd, Michael. **A Strange Eventful History: The Dramatic Lives of Ellen Terry, Henry Irving, and Their Remarkable Families.** Farrar. Though it has the detail, flow, and vast cast of characters of solid historical fiction, Holroyd's theater biography is even more profound as nonfiction. His language is well crafted to describe the sensational lives of these 19th-century English players, and quotations from a wealth of primary and secondary sources melt into his epic narrative.

James, Marlon. **The Book of Night Women.** Riverhead: Penguin Group. If you think you know what New World slavery must have been like, think again. By tracing the life of Lilith, a slave in 1700s Jamaica with disturbing powers of her own, James makes you live the full force and horror of a life in bondage. Fearlessly written and gaspingly wrenching to read, this is a hard and beautiful book. (F)

Jansen, Jonathan D. **Knowledge in the Blood: Confronting Race and the Apartheid Past.** Stanford Univ. South African apartheid may have officially ended in 1994, but in 2000, when Jansen became the first black dean of the faculty of education at the University of Pretoria, he was administrating a white-majority student body in an officially Afrikaans-speaking institution. Not simply a personal memoir, this is the story of how commitment to enlightened pedagogical principles can bring divergent populations—the historically dominant and the historically victimized—into engagement.

Lasdun, James. **It's Beginning To Hurt: Stories.** Farrar. What happens when we break through the gauze of everydayness, and existential panic hits? We get this remarkable collection of stories, offering affecting but unsentimental truths about how we live. A jittery stockbroker suddenly convinced that the new neighbors have made off with his daughter is just one of the many acutely imagined characters in Lasdun's bravura work.

Levenson, Thomas. **Newton and the Counterfeiter: The Unknown Detective Career of the World's Greatest Scientist.** Houghton Harcourt. As a detective, Sherlock Holmes has nothing on Sir Isaac Newton. In a superb science biography that reads like a gripping true-crime tale, Levenson unveils a near-forgotten chapter of Newton's remarkable life, when he became Warden of the Royal Mint and embarked on a successful cat-and-mouse pursuit of master counterfeiter William Chaloner.

McCommons, James. **Waiting on a Train: The Embattled Future of Passenger Rail Service—A Year Spent Riding Across America.** Chelsea Green. In joining the author on his 2008 rail travels around the country—that is, where passenger rail still survives—readers get a fine, accessible history of American passenger and freight rail service; a travel memoir with authentically rendered portraits; and a prescription for the future of American railroads. With the country

seemingly poised on the threshold of major new commitments to a mythic component of our continental history, this is crucial reading.

Mantel, Hilary. **Wolf Hall**. Macrae Bks: Holt. We all know the story of Henry VIII, but what about his adviser and, finally, victim, Thomas Cromwell? Mantel makes Cromwell and indeed all Tudor England her own, giving us a whole new picture of the wily statesman in a rigorously written work full of careful detail but driven by the drama portrayed. A model not simply of historical fiction but of literary endeavor in general. (F)

Mayo, C.M. **The Last Prince of the Mexican Empire**. Unbridled. Once upon a time, there was a little half-American boy who briefly became heir to the Mexican throne—until his distraught parents sued the doomed Emperor Maximilian for his return. As in the best historical fiction, Mayo's sparkling first novel transforms a forgotten historical footnote into a spellbinding, heartbreaking tale filled with drama and fascinating characters.

Morgan, C.E. **All the Living**. Farrar. Caught in a fraught relationship with a man trying to salvage his family's Kentucky farm, a young woman considers her choices: hard love or the freedom to be alone. Like the landscape it depicts, this brief, breathtakingly accomplished debut novel is pared to the essentials—and it's essential reading. (F)

Nguyen, Bich Minh. **Short Girls**. Viking. This lovely debut novel about Vietnamese American sisters Van and Linny Luong and their eccentric, invention-obsessed father depicts a pluralistic immigrant culture in which all of us are short people trying to measure up to America's tall ideals. (F)

Norrell, Robert J. **Up from History: The Life of Booker T. Washington**. Belknap: Harvard Univ. Even before his death in 1915, Booker T. Washington, possessed of extraordinary determination to improve his life and that of other struggling blacks through education and enterprise, had been largely dismissed by black and white intellectuals as an accommodationist. In this careful work, Norrell calmly seeks out the man on his own terms and in the context of his own era, allowing us to meet him again—for the first time.

Phillips, Jayne Anne. **Lark and Termite**. Knopf. By illuminating the bond between Lark and her younger brother, Termite, mentally disabled and yet with astonishing gifts of his own, Phillips shows how we are all bound together and how we fit into the larger world. Their father's life and death as a soldier in Korea adds resonance to this theme. A pitch-perfect, quietly moving novel. (F)

Sanderson, Eric W. (text) & Markley Boyer (illus.) **Mannahatta: A Natural History of New York City**. Abrams. Four centuries of human habitation have all but wiped out Manhattan's natural splendor, but thanks to the striking images presented here, we can get a glimpse of what “the

island of many hills” looked like when Henry Hudson arrived in 1609. Readers don't have to be New Yorkers to be enthralled by this remarkable ecological reconstruction. (508.7471)

Sheehan, Jason. **Cooking Dirty: A Story of Life, Sex, Love and Death in the Kitchen.** Farrar. ISBN For food critic Sheehan, who spent almost 20 years on the restaurant kitchen front lines, cooking is war. His rough, tough, and riveting culinary biography details the scars he earned in his journey through life and gives readers a true taste of a real cook's working world.

Soskice, Janet. **The Sisters of Sinai: How Two Lady Adventurers Discovered the Hidden Gospels.** Knopf. Agnes and Margaret Smith—identical twins from Scotland raised by their Victorian father to possess the intellect and spirit then normally reserved for men—intrepidly toured the Middle East, ultimately using their self-taught skills with ancient languages to search for early manuscripts of the gospels. By camel, by foot, to the Sinai's St. Catherine's Monastery they went—and made a breathtaking discovery. Wryly told with a marvelous sense of narrative rhythm, this is the best kind of adventure story. (225.092)

Thompson, Nicholas. **The Hawk and the Dove: Paul Nitze, George Kennan, and the History of the Cold War.** Holt. Grandson of Nitze but rendering Kennan's story with equal insight, Thompson presents an absorbing study of two men crucially engaged in designing—and seeking to renovate—the architecture of U.S. engagement with the world behind the Iron Curtain after World War II. In tracing Nitze's and Kennan's journeys, intersecting, diverging, and drawing together across the years, he disdains stereotypes—even the titular duality—to give us an era with its complexity and humanity restored. (973.92)

Tropper, Jonathan. **This Is Where I Leave You.** Dutton. In his best novel yet, Tropper transforms what could have been a stereotypical situation comedy—dysfunctional Jewish family sits shiva for the late patriarch—into a hilarious, testosterone-driven thrill ride that is also heartfelt and poignant. (F)

Walbert, Kate. **A Short History of Women.** Scribner. Ranging from Dorothy Townsend, a suffragette who starves herself to death for the cause in 1914 England, to great-great-granddaughter Dorothy (“Dora”) Barrett-Deel, a headstrong college student in post-9/11 America, Walbert sweeps through four generations whose lives sum up a century of women's history. She could not have offered a more sharply observed or elegantly interleaved story. (F)

Zizek, Slavoj. **First as Tragedy, Then as Farce.** Verso. Karl Marx said that history repeats itself by first occurring as tragedy, then as farce. Zizek—called “the most dangerous philosopher in the West”—adds that farce is more dangerous than the actual tragedy. Case in point: modern-day capitalism. If the Left does not fully reinvent itself, he maintains, the world faces a cataclysm. This is but an ellipsis of what unfolds as a complex argument by a courageous thinker.

Best Genre Fiction 2009**MYSTERY**

George, Kathleen. **The Odds**. Thomas Dunne Bks: St. Martin's. George's superb procedural featuring Pittsburgh detectives Colleen Greer and John Potocki is also a poignant tale of four abandoned children struggling to live with dignity against all odds. (MYS)

Gruley, Bryan. **Starvation Lake**. Touchstone: S. & S. Returning home in disgrace to Starvation Lake, MI, reporter Gus Carpenter digs into the town's secrets when a long-ago murder resurfaces. Gruley's riveting debut mixes investigative journalism, hockey, and a man who finds his moral fiber.

Hayes, J.M. **Server Down: A Mad Dog & Englishman Mystery**. Poisoned Pen. The zany English family mobilizes when Mad Dog's house is blown up and he is wanted for the murder of a Tucson cop. Hayes blends humor, unforgettable characters, and a clever plot that is sure to stymie even the most astute reader.

Rozan, S.J. **The Shanghai Moon: A Lydia Chin/Bill Smith Mystery**. Minotaur: St. Martin's. The missing jewelry of a Jewish family who sought refuge in 1930s Shanghai and the hunt for a Chinese cop who stole the valuables in 2008 make for an unusual case for PIs Chin and Smith, back after a seven-year hiatus. Rozan delivers one of her best.

Webb, Betty. **Desert Lost: A Lena Jones Mystery**. Poisoned Pen. When PI Lena Jones attempts to help a friend save women from an ultraorthodox polygamous Mormon cult, she uncovers an ugly secret world and deadly danger. Webb's writing is superb, and her portrayal of the Scottsdale, AZ, area is compelling.

SF & FANTASY

Bacigalupi, Paolo. **The Windup Girl**. Night Shade. Postmodern Bangkok springs to life in Bacigalupi's brilliant dystopian tale of culture clash, recalling the best of China Miéville and Neal Stephenson. (SF)

Baxter, Stephen. **Flood**. ROC: Penguin.. Infusing his global-warming disaster epic with mythic proportions, Baxter has written a compulsively readable apocalyptic classic.

Gilman, Laura Anne. **Flesh and Fire**. Pocket: S. & S. (Vineart War, Bk. 1). Gilman's fantasy series opener presents a unique magical premise (casting spells with wine) and introduces a genuinely likable and resourceful young hero.

Robinson, Kim Stanley. **Galileo's Dream**. Spectra: Bantam. The future of the colonies on Jupiter's moons hinges on the advice of a visitor from Earth's past: Galileo Galilei. Blending epic sf with alternate history, this is a masterwork of storytelling, philosophy, and science.

Sanderson, Brandon. **Warbreaker**. Tor. In a world where humans are reborn as gods after they die, two sisters become touchstones for a struggle that will either save or destroy their way of life. Sanderson's unique take on epic fantasy elevates standard motifs into imaginative new forms that resonate long after the story's end.

ROMANCE

Anderson, Catherine. **Star Bright**. Signet: NAL: Penguin Group (USA). Stripped of her self-confidence and on the run from her abusive husband, terrified Rainie Hall Danning goes undercover as Anna Pritchard, hires on at Parker Harrigan's Oregon horse ranch, and begins to heal. Then her psychotic husband tracks her down. Heart-wrenching, chilling, yet sweetly romantic; classic Anderson.

Brockway, Connie. **So Enchanting**. Onyx: Penguin Group (USA). A presumed young witch and her truly magically gifted companion living quietly in Scotland attract the attention of a titled barrister who's intent on exposing charlatans and travels to remote Little Firkin with his nephew. A shimmer of beautifully handled magic overlays this heartwarming, exquisitely crafted Victorian romance, which rewards readers with not one but two love stories.

Gracie, Anne. **To Catch a Bride**. Berkley Sensation. In Egypt searching for the missing granddaughter of a family friend, a footloose nobleman falls in love with a spirited young woman who is not quite what she seems. Appealing characters, a multilayered plot, class issues, and vivid, realistic descriptions of early 19th-century Cairo and England result in an uncommonly compelling tale.

Krentz, Jayne Ann. **Running Hot**. Putnam. (Arcane Society, Bk. 5). Sent to Maui on a routine assignment for the obscure Jones & Jones agency, an unlikely but psychically in sync pair of operatives are quickly swept up in a well-plotted caper that is anything but routine. Vicious Nightshade agents and a diva with killer high notes enrich this funny, sexy, mind-bending thriller.

Phillips, Susan Elizabeth. **What I Did for Love**. Morrow. Thanks to a doctored drink in a Las Vegas casino, a pair of former teenage sitcom stars at odds for years end up married. For publicity reasons, they agree to pass off their new state as the real thing, never thinking that it would become the real thing. Another funny, poignant, totally satisfying winner from an author who doesn't disappoint. (F)

THRILLERS

Connelly, Michael. **The Scarecrow**. Little, Brown. This is a scary thriller starring reporter Jack McEvoy (from *The Poet*) and an even scarier look at the decline and fall of the newspaper industry. (MYS)

Doetsch, Richard. **The 13th Hour**. Atria: S. & S. A man receives a chance to prove he did not murder his wife and to save her life (yes, you read that right) in this utterly original thriller. (F)

Gardner, Lisa. **The Neighbor**. Bantam. A mom tucks her daughter into bed and then vanishes. With a seemingly uninterested husband and a convicted sex offender living down the street as possible suspects, Gardner's twisty domestic thriller keeps readers guessing.

Lawson, Mike. **House Secrets**. Atlantic Monthly. A reporter's death ties in to the political aspirations of a powerful senator, and House troubleshooter Joe DeMarco will learn that DC is built on cover-ups and deception. An outstanding political thriller.

Rollins, James. **The Doomsday Key**. Morrow. History, science, and action-adventure combine seamlessly in Rollins's best book to date, which focuses on a substance (the "Doomsday Key") brought to England by ancient Egyptians that promises to be strong medicine

Best How-To 2009

Birchard, Tom with Natalie Danford. **The Veselka Cookbook: Recipes and Stories from a Landmark Restaurant in New York's East Village**. Thomas Dunne Bks: St. Martin's.

Cheng, François. **The Way of Beauty: Five Meditations for Spiritual Transformation**. Inner Traditions.

The Complete Photo Guide to Sewing: 1200 Full-Color How-To Photos. rev. ed. Creative Pub: Quayside. ISBN 978-1-58923-434-5. pap. \$24.99. FIBER CRAFTS (LJ 4/15/09)

Deeb, Margie. **The Beader's Color Palette: 20 Creative Projects and 220 Inspired Combinations for Beaded and Gemstone Jewelry**. Watson-Guptill. (745.582)

England, Diane. **The Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Relationship: How To Support Your Partner and Keep Your Relationship Healthy**. Adams Media. (697.78)

Ewald, Chase Reynolds (text) & Audrey Hall (photogs). **The New Western Home**. Gibbs Smith.

Ewing, Rex A. & Doug Pratt. **Got Sun? Go Solar: Harness Nature's Free Energy To Heat and Power Your Grid-Tied Home.**

Garskof, Josh. **Tiling: Expert Advice To Get the Job Done Right.** Sunset: Lane. ISBN 978-0-376-01680-5. pap. \$21.95. DIY (LJ 9/1/09)

Gourmet Today: More Than 1000 All-New Recipes for the Contemporary Kitchen. Houghton Harcourt. ed. by Ruth Reichl. (641.59)

Griffel, Lois. **Painting the Impressionist Landscape: Lessons in Interpreting Light and Color.** Watson-Guptill.

Hair, Jaden. **The Steamy Kitchen Cookbook: 101 Asian Recipes Simple Enough for Tonight's Dinner.** Tuttle.

Hale, Robert K. & Thomas L. Williams. **Starting Your Career as an Interior Designer.** Allworth.

Keller, Thomas. **Ad Hoc at Home: Family-Style Recipes.** Artisan: Workman. (641.593)

Meyers, Robin R. **Saving Jesus from the Church: How To Stop Worshiping Christ and Start Following Jesus.** HarperOne: HarperCollins

Mulligan, Steve. **Understanding Composition: The Complete Photographer's Guide.** Photographers' Inst., dist. by Sterling.

Nouwen, Henri J.M. **Home Tonight: Further Reflections on the Parable of the Prodigal Son.** Doubleday.

Seiff, Joanne. **Fiber Gathering: Knit, Crochet, Spin, and Dye More Than 25 Projects Inspired by America's Festivals.**

Silver, Ron with Rosemary Black. **Bubby's Brunch Cookbook: Recipes and Menus from New York's Favorite Comfort Restaurant.** Ballantine.

Speyer, Jodyne L. **Dump'Em: How To Break Up with Anyone from Your Best Friend to Your Hairdresser.** Collins: HarperCollins.

Spong, John Shelby. **Eternal Life: A New Vision; Beyond Religion, Beyond Theism, Beyond Heaven and Hell.** HarperOne: HarperCollins.

Tenzer, Debbie. **Do One Nice Thing: Little Things You Can Do To Make the World a Whole Lot Nicer.** Crown.

Van Niekerk, Di. **Cicely Mary Barker's Flower Fairies in Ribbon Embroidery and Stumpwork.**
Search Pr., dist. by IPG.

Wintz, Jack. **Will I See My Dog in Heaven?** Paraclete.