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*We Review the
Best of the Latest
Books*

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Arts & Photography / Fantasy

[It Must Be Art: Big O Poster Artists of the 1960s and 70s](#) by Michael Fishel & Nigel Suckling, with a foreword by Roger Dean (Schiffer Publishing Ltd.)

Throughout the 1960s and 70s, London-based Big O Posters helped define the new and democratic art medium of the psychedelic poster, a vehicle for rebellion against the old order that went hand in hand with the music, literature, and film of the time. [It Must Be Art](#) is a comprehensive collection of works published by Big O artists, creative folks whose artistry developed almost completely outside the influence of the art establishment.

Michael Fishel, who is responsible for the book concept and design, is a lifelong artist and painter of magical visionary landscapes and fantasy art. Nigel Suckling, who wrote the story and text, is a well-known writer on myth, legend and the mysterious.

Included in the more than 300 images in [It Must Be Art](#) are works by 19 artists, including Martin Sharp, Roger Dean, H.R. Giger, Robert Venosa, and Vali Myers whose signature styles include sci-fi, fantasy, visionary, botanical, and surrealism. In addition to hundreds of original works, [It Must Be Art](#) digs below the surface to offer insights and anecdotes about the era, the artistic process, and reveals connections to artists from the past (Aubrey Beardsley, Alphonse Mucha, Kay Nielsen) whose

spirit chimed with the age of Big O Posters.

Roger Dean in the foreword says that when he was at the Royal College of Art, in the late sixties, the magazine Oz really caught his attention as an example of a radical alternative to the way graphic design was taught and practiced. Being simply fascinated with the way it looked.

Peter Ledeboer was business manager at Oz, and as he recalls, it was the springboard from which he launched Big O. 'Oz' referred to that group of Australians who came over at that time and shook up everyone's cultural lives – Richard Neville, Martin Sharp, Germaine Greer, Barry Humphries, Clive James, and the like.

Nigel Suckling in the introduction to [It Must Be Art](#) says that as a student in London in the late 60s and early 70s it was impossible not to be conscious of Big O Posters. He, like most others, was unaware of the company's name. It was the images that caught the eye, pinned large on bedsit walls and filling shop windows wherever you went. Psychedelic posters went hand in hand with hippie music, and an enormous explosion of imagination was poured into them at the same time as artists were rescued from the past whose spirit chimed with the age. And as with hippie music, after a while you started to pay attention to the labels of the companies providing the inspiration – Vertigo, Harvest, and Chrysalis, for example, in the case of music – and Big

O with posters. There were hosts of other publishers at the time, but Big O was the name found most often in small print at the foot of the posters that caught your eye.

The company was run by Peter Ledebor, a big, boisterous man bursting with enthusiasm for whatever was the company's latest publication.

Sickling says that his first encounter with Peter must have been around 1973, when, as a hopeful artist, he turned up uninvited at the old offices out in Battersea, south London, with a portfolio of mostly black-and-white drawings. Despite his lack of appointment, he was soon shown into the office of a jovial bear of a man who turned out to be the boss. Coffee was brought and cigarettes lit while he leafed through Sickling's folder of mostly A4-size drawings. Finally, after not keeping him too long in suspense, Peter said: "I tell you what, Nigel: I can't publish any of these. I like them and they're certainly weird enough, but they're too small and there's not enough color. Bring me something big and colorful and I'll see what we can do."

He took him at his word, and four months later he was back in the same office with a large A2 picture bursting with color and as much strangeness as he could cram into it. He considered Sickling's magnum opus thoughtfully for a while, nodding his head from time to time and quite obviously having some internal dialogue. Finally he exclaimed: "Amazing! They never usually come

back." Then, seeing his incomprehension, he went on: "I mean the artists who come knocking at our door. We never usually see them again. This is great; we'll publish it."

Sickling says he left with Gerry Rafferty's "So They Made You a Star" chiming in his mind and Battersea looking like paradise.

Back in the day, everyone had to have posters on their walls. [It Must Be Art](#) brings the psychedelic art and artists and publishers of the hippy era to American audiences. A beautiful coffee-table book, it digs below the surface.

Audio / Literature & Fiction / Mystery / Historical

[Caught in Time: A Novel \(Kendra Donovan Mysteries\) Audio CD – Audiobook, 2 MP3-CD Audio, unabridged, running time 17.5 hours](#) by Julie McElwain, narrated by Lucy Rayner (Tantor Audio)

Still stranded in 1815, in [Caught in Time](#) Kendra Donovan finds herself on the trail of a vicious murderer. As a special agent for the FBI, Kendra thought she'd encountered every kind of evil. But when another, even more vicious murder rocks East Dingleford, Kendra realizes that they're dealing with a stone-cold killer – one who has a shocking secret that he will do anything to protect.

The book is part of the *Kendra Donovan Mysteries Series*.

The author of [Caught in Time](#), Julie

McElwain, has freelanced for numerous publications, from professional photography magazines to those following the fashion industry. Currently she is West Coast editor for *Soaps in Depth*, a national soap opera magazine covering the number one daytime drama, *The Young and the Restless*. The narrator of the audio version, Lucy Rayner, is an award-winning British actress who has worked on both sides of the Atlantic in theater productions and films and has narrated many audiobooks.

There is only one place Kendra wants to travel – back to her own time period in the twenty-first century. But since that's not happening, she agrees instead to travel with her new guardian, the Duke of Aldridge, to one of his smaller estates in Lancashire. Their journey takes them through Yorkshire, a region whose breathtaking beauty masks a simmering violence brought on by the Industrial Revolution, which pits mill owner against worker.

When Kendra and the Duke encounter a band of Luddites on a lonely, fog-shrouded road, the Duke informs the authorities in the nearby village of East Dingleford that mischief may have been done at the local mill. However, it isn't just mischief but murder that is discovered, when the body of the mill manager, Mr. Stone, is found dead in his office.

The Constable is certain the radical-minded Luddites committed the murder. One look at the crime scene and Kendra knows they did not,

prompting the Duke to shock the locals by volunteering their services to catch the real killer. Joined by lover Alec and Bow Street Runner Sam Kelly, Kendra in [Caught in Time](#) must sort through the puzzle of Stone's rather unsavory life, picking apart alibis and dissecting carefully created deceptions from a growing list of suspects.

[Caught in Time](#) is an excellent historical mystery. McElwain weaves a delicate web that can keep readers guessing until the very last moment, and the time travel framing the story adds a fascinating extra layer. It's well-researched with a fast-moving plot and many quirky village characters. – Shelf Awareness

A combination of science fiction time travel, mystery and suspense, [Caught in Time](#) is a simply fascinating and compelling read from cover to cover.

Showcasing author Julie McElwain's impressive flair for originality and narrative driven storytelling, [Caught in Time](#) is very highly recommended for community library collections. – Midwest Book Review

A solidly constructed crime novel with a little time

travel. And it sure is fun to watch Kendra use modern-day forensic and investigative techniques in a time when crime solving was a rudimentary science. – Booklist

Well researched as to the historical time period, [Caught in Time](#) also has a compelling and fast moving plot. Highly original.

Children's Books / Ages 5-7

[With Love, Grandma](#) by Helen Foster James, with illustrations by Petra Brown (**Loves You Series**: Sleeping Bear Press)

Every grandma knows that her love for her grandchildren can span great distances.

The newest story from the author-illustrator duo of the best-selling *Loves You* series, this time featuring hedgehogs, [With Love, Grandma](#) is written through sweet-as-can-be letters from Grandma to grandchild. Whimsical illustrations of everyday fun are accompanied by back-matter instructions for making s'mores and a pirate's hat.

Author Helen Foster James is a former teacher and coordinator of library media services.

Petra Brown has been a children's book illustrator since 2006.

In [With Love, Grandma](#), Grandma Hedgehog is having a busy year filled with fun activities, but not a day goes by

that she doesn't think about or write to her beloved grandchild. From visiting a bookstore to hiking, each experience inspires grandma to write a letter expressing her love. And when Grandma finally gets back home to 'Camp Grandma,' it's time for both grandmother and grandchild to create new memories together.

This tenderhearted valentine reinforces the message that distance is no distance, when it comes to love and family.

Taking a break from the usual routine of 'Camp Grandma,' this active grandparent embarks on an adventurous excursion enjoying the woods, hiking, participating in painting classes, kayaking, visiting the beach, and even finding a 'super bookstore.' Taking time out for herself is important, but Grandma continually thinks of her little one and relays a series of endearing messages in letters and postcards that arrive almost daily in her grandchild's mailbox. Each begins with a term of endearment for the child and a line or two about what new experience Grandma is enjoying, always linking it to something the two, elder and youngster, did

together in the past or will
do once again when
'Camp Grandma'
resumes. "Dear
Doodlebug, I took a
painting lesson outside
today," leads to the
assurance that "We'll paint
together at CAMP
GRANDMA. Let's walk to
the park and paint
whatever we see."
Although it is
chronological, the story is
not linear, asking readers
to glean it from the
specifics of each letter or
note. Soft pencil and
delicate watercolors show
an engaging, vigorous
grandmother enjoying her
outings with smiling fellow
forest animals while
complementary scenes
lovingly portray her
memories of days spent
with her grandchild.
Should encourage
dialogic reading and
discussion – and hugs. –
Kirkus Review

[With Love, Grandma](#) is a tender story
from the author and illustrator team
behind *Grandma Loves You!*,
demonstrating that a grandma's love
knows no bounds.

Current Affairs / Politics / Journalism /
Urban Studies / Activism / Racism

[The Poisoned City: Flint's Water and the
American Urban Tragedy](#) by Anna Clark
(Metropolitan Books)

* An Amazon Best Book of July 2018 *

When the people of Flint, Michigan,
turned on their faucets in April 2014, the
water pouring out was poisoned with
lead and other toxins. Through a series
of disastrous decisions, the state
government had switched the city's
water supply to a source that corroded
Flint's aging lead pipes. Complaints
about the foul-smelling, discolored
water were dismissed: Flint residents,
mostly poor and African American,
were seen as not credible, even in
matters of their own lives.

[The Poisoned City](#) chronicles the deep
causes of Flint's disaster, what made it a
'long, slow burn' rather than the result of
one bad decision: the dark history of
lead in public water systems; racism and
white flight; the exodus of industry and
money from urban centers; the
quashing of residents' authority and
voices.

While there is moral cowardice in what
happened to Flint, there is also heroism,
most especially in the residents who
chose, again and again, to act rather
than be acted upon. Author Anna Clark
infuses a bleak episode in our nation's
history with the hope and determination
of individuals banding together.

Clark is a journalist in Detroit. She has
been a writer-in-residence in the Detroit
public schools, a Fulbright fellow in

Nairobi and a Knight-Wallace journalism fellow at the University of Michigan.

According to Clark in [The Poisoned City](#), it took eighteen months of activism by city residents and a band of dogged outsiders to force the state to admit that the water was poisonous. By that time, twelve people had died and Flint's children had suffered irreparable harm. The long battle for accountability and a humane response to this manmade disaster has only just begun.

In the first full account of this American tragedy, [The Poisoned City](#) recounts the gripping story of Flint's poisoned water through the people who caused it, suffered from it, and exposed it. It is a chronicle of one town, but could also be about any American city, all made precarious by the neglect of infrastructure and the erosion of democratic decision making. Places like Flint are set up to fail – and for the people who live and work in them, the consequences can be fatal.

An exceptional work of journalism. Clark delivers a thorough account of a still-evolving public health crisis, one with an unmistakable racial subtext.... Her book is a deeply reported account of catastrophic mismanagement. But it's also a celebration of civic engagement, a tribute to those who are fighting back against

governmental malpractice. – San Francisco Chronicle

It's hard to overstate how important Anna Clark's new book is... A taut, riveting and comprehensive account... Clark is meticulous in untangling the welter of misstatements, cover-ups and dismissals of the problem's severity by officials convinced that staunching the red ink hemorrhaging the crippled economies of Flint and Michigan somehow was more important than children afflicted by lead poisoning. – USA Today

A comprehensive chronicle of the crisis – with an eye for the institutional corruption and indifference that enabled it. – The New York Times

A meticulously annotated, brutally honest (she names names), and compassionately narrated account of a disgraceful American crisis... [The Poisoned City](#) is a cautionary tale for every town and city across the land. – The Christian Science Monitor

Searing scrutiny...
Riveting... A sobering read through all the spin and cover ups... A cornucopia of history and responsibly researched details... I have yet to encounter a more thorough, accurate or readable account of the poisoning of Flint's municipal water supply than [The Poisoned City](#). This is an important book, for Flint, for all American cities, and for our nation. – East Village Magazine, Flint, Michigan

Incisive and informed... In the first full accounting of the Flint water crisis, Clark combines a staggering amount of research and several intimate story lines to reveal how the Michigan city was poisoned by its leaders and then largely abandoned to its fate by state officials... Clark takes no prisoners, naming all the names and presenting the confirming research. 'Neglect,' she warns, 'is not a passive force in American cities, but an aggressive one.' – Booklist, starred review

A complex, exquisitely detailed account... A potent cautionary tale of

urban neglect and indifference... Clark goes far beyond the immediate crisis – captured nationally in images of bottled water being distributed to Flint's poor, the most severely affected – to explain 'decades of negligence' that had mired the city in 'debt, dysfunctional urban policy, disappearing investment, disintegrating infrastructure, and a compromised democratic process.' She warns that other declining American cities are similarly threatened. – Kirkus Reviews, starred review

The story of the Flint crisis is disturbing enough even if one knows only a few details. But the entire case, as laid out by Anna Clark, is enraging. Clark has sifted the layers of politics, history, and myopic policy to chronicle the human costs of this tragedy. Flint is not an outlier, it's a parable – one whose implications matter not just to a single municipality but to every city in the country and all who live in them. – Jelani Cobb, Ira A. Lipman Professor of Journalism, Columbia University

The poisoning of Flint was unintentional but it was no accident. Read Anna Clark's empathetic yet emphatic history and you will understand how this American tragedy could have been prevented – and why it wasn't. Her book will make you mad, but it will also give you hope for the rebirth of our cities and maybe even our democracy. – Dan Fagin, author of Toms River: A Story of Science and Salvation

A sweeping, authoritative account of an American tragedy, [The Poisoned City](#), will open readers' eyes to both the scary truth that most of our cities rely on equally weak water infrastructure and how a city's residents can force others to listen.

Folklore / Memoirs / Humor

[My Southern Journey: True Stories from the Heart of the South](#) by Rick Bragg (Oxmoor House)

From the celebrated bestselling author of *All Over but the Shoutin'* and winner of the Pulitzer Prize, Rick Bragg, comes a collection of essays on life in the South, [My Southern Journey](#).

Bragg was a newspaper reporter for two decades and is currently Professor of Writing in the Journalism Department at the University of Alabama.

Bragg explores enduring Southern truths about home, place, spirit, table, and the regions' varied geographies, including his native Alabama, Cajun country, and the Gulf Coast.

Collected from over a decade of his writing, with many never-before-published essays written specifically for this edition, [My Southern Journey](#) is an entertaining and engaging read. For the first time, Bragg's portraits of Southern life are combined into one volume. [My Southern Journey](#) delves into regional obsessions from college football to bass fishing, mayonnaise to spoon bread, and gospel music to storytelling.

Original drawings illustrate this volume, which includes an all-new introduction, especially for Southerners and fans of Southern culture and great writing.

[My Southern Journey](#) is divided into 5 sections:

- Home: "I write about home so I can be certain that someone will. It is not much more complicated than that. Home for me has always been as much a matter of class as location. My home is not the comfortable South, not the big churches, or the country clubs, or the giant waterfront houses.... Home is not a thing of position, or standing."
- Table: [Bragg on his love of Mayo.] "I guess it is a weakness, a sin, like sloth or various forms of coveting, but like most bad things that Southerners do, I shall blame it on my heritage."

- Place: "My homes is where the working people are, where you still see a Torino every now and then, and people still use motor oil to kill the mange."
- Craft: "But the stories will last whether I do or not, count whether or I do or not, and the rich folks will just have to get used to the idea that their stories are only part of the story, and not the only part worthy of the clay, and the pines, and the years."
- Spirit: "We do lose, of course. We feel the air grow thick when we do. Our limbs grow heavy. I have stood on beautiful campuses of Southern universities and seen what, I swear, was a kind of graying of the landscape, as if losing had bleached out the beautiful red of the bricks and green of the lawns."
Bragg captures the rhythms of small town life with grace and pathos... – *Chicago Tribune*

It is hard to think of a writer who reminds us more forcefully and wonderfully of what people and families are about. – The New York Times

[Bragg has] a true gift for great storytelling, the kind ... that makes you think it's just a plain old story, until he gets to the end and you're either weeping or covered with goosebumps. – New Orleans Times-Picayune
Bragg tells about the South

with such power and bone-naked love ... he will make you cry. – Atlanta Journal-Constitution

[My Southern Journey](#) is keenly observed and written with an insightful and deadpan sense of humor. Deeply felt and beautifully expressed, this engaging book is a love letter to the place Bragg calls home.

Health & Fitness / Coaching

[Lifestyle Wellness Coaching](#), 3rd edition
by James Gavin & Madeleine Mcbrearty (Human Kinetics)

Lifestyles have changed dramatically over the past quarter century. Along with these changes come exciting opportunities, including new career paths in the professional domain of health and wellness coaching. Centered on an evidence-based process for guiding change; [Lifestyle Wellness Coaching](#), 3rd edition, offers a systematic approach to helping clients achieve enduring changes in their personal health and wellness behaviors through a supportive and forward-moving coaching relationship.

Authors are James Gavin, PhD, and Madeleine Mcbrearty, PhD. Gavin is the director of the Centre for Human Relations and Community Studies and a full professor in the department of applied human sciences at Concordia University in Montreal. Mcbrearty is a faculty member for the professional and personal coaching certification (PPCC) program offered through the Centre for

Continuing Education, also at Concordia University in Montreal. She also teaches in the department of applied human sciences at Concordia. [Lifestyle Wellness Coaching](#) has been thoroughly revised and updated to keep pace with the rapidly evolving field of wellness coaching. It is complemented by discussions, case studies, reflective opportunities, and practical aids and engages readers through multiple approaches to learning.

[Lifestyle Wellness Coaching](#) examines real coaching conversations to assess key considerations, such as the types of questions to ask, how to provide feedback effectively, and how to facilitate action planning. The text presents communication strategies to motivate, guide, inform, and support clients' processes toward personal change with a holistic approach. It addresses boundaries of care and advice appropriate to coaching relationships. Other issues explored include developing a trusting relationship, creating goals that are aligned with coaching processes, unblocking clients' energy and discovering resources for change, and generating forward movement through the skillful use of the International Coach Federation's 11 core competencies.

[Lifestyle Wellness Coaching](#) introduces readers to models that identify clients' progress through the stages of change. First, the text explores the popular transtheoretical model (TTM) of health-related behavior change and its

delineation of six stages of clients' readiness to change. The discussion of TTM includes strategies appropriate to clients in various stages of readiness to change. The text also presents the learning-through-change model (LCM), revealing the deep layers beneath each phase of client movement toward change. Readers are offered a map for coaching clients toward goal achievement. The authors' unique flow model of coaching illustrates how professional coaches can help clients navigate the sometimes turbulent events of a person's life in order to change habitual patterns of behavior.

The companion web resource offers a complete kit of assessment tools to help establish a strong framework for successful coaching. A welcome packet, coaching readiness index, introductory session form, and between-sessions questionnaire benefit both the professional and client in laying the groundwork. Other supplemental resources, such as a social and emotional intelligence assessment and a goal setting form, support the journey.

[Lifestyle Wellness Coaching](#), 3rd edition, is the definitive resource for those seeking to embrace wellness coaching and propel clients to healthy, effective change.

History / Higher Education / International / Policy

[International House Melbourne 1957-2016: Sixty years of fraternitas](#) by Frank Larkins (Melbourne University Press)

The story of International House (IH) foreshadows an important change in Australian higher education.

[International House Melbourne 1957-2016](#) tells the story.

Australian universities were once the preserve of local students, isolated from the region and the wider currents of global exchange. In 1949, a mere 350 overseas students enrolled at the University of Melbourne amid a student community of more than 9,000.

World War II proved a stark message – this nation could not stand apart from the Asia-Pacific region, but must engage and nurture relationships. Higher education policy quickly established itself as an important part of national policy, a way to create new links with the leaders and professionals who would transform the region when peace returned.

In the years immediately after the war, university administrators, business leaders and interested community members helped plan an International House at the University of Melbourne – a collegiate home where international and Australian students could live and learn together. The project required bold vision and considerable stamina. For a community in which international students had been a rarity, the initiative required explanation and encouragement. Fortunately the founders, pioneering staff and brilliant students proved superb advocates, and in 2017 International House celebrated its 60th year as a college at the University

of Melbourne. Through those years, international students have moved from the periphery to the center of Australian higher education, enriching the nation's life in myriad ways.

Turning 60 is an opportune moment to reflect on the journey so far, which distinguished scholar Frank Larkins does expertly in [International House Melbourne 1957-2016](#).

In early chapters, Professor Larkins describes the founding years of International House amid a complex social context. He narrates how Australia became one of seven Commonwealth countries in January 1950 to support the Colombo Plan. This international agreement for economic and social development through cooperation included a commitment to support students from the region.

For Australia, international students posed immediate challenges. With the decades-old White Australia Policy still in place, and anti-Asian attitudes sadly widespread, early recipients of Colombo Plan scholarships faced challenges.

Professor Larkins is ideally placed to record this history. His relationship with International House and the University of Melbourne reaches back to the 1960s, when he joined International House as a resident chemistry tutor. While a student at the House, Professor Larkins completed a Bachelor of Education and Masters of Science with Honours. He remained closely engaged with International House, returning in the

1970s as a member of the International House Council. In 2009 he was elected to succeed Peter Bobeff as Chair of the House, making an important contribution in his term to the strategy and success of the institution.

For the wider University of Melbourne community, Professor Larkins is known for his sustained leadership and influence. He served with distinction as Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Research at the University of Melbourne from 1990 to 2005. He later led the University into an era of unprecedented globalization as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International, later Global Relations) from 2006 to 2008. Such is his esteem that soon after retirement Professor Larkins was awarded the University's highest honor, the Doctor of Laws (honoris cause).

[International House Melbourne 1957-2016](#) reflects Professor Larkins' deep knowledge of International House and of the political landscape in which the institution was born. It also demonstrates his skill as a writer and analyst. The book is ambitious in scope, structured around the events that shaped International House's activities between 1950 and 2016.

*The real IH is not the food
or the fees or the showers
or the office. It's the
people who laugh and
talk and cry and care and
worry who make it
special... Sadly, we can't
remain this close forever,
but we'll always have the*

memories. – Megan Lloyd,
Valedict, 1989

*Profoundly, IH makes us
aware of our prejudices...
It taught me that... I'm
rarely 'right', that I must
learn, I must show respect,
I must show tolerance, I
must be kind and that I am
flawed. Just like IH
accepted me and my
abundance of
imperfections, I must do so
upon others. We are
flawed, we just didn't
know it until we came to
IH. Gaining this knowledge
has made us better
people.* – Joe Zhang,
student president, 2007

*Imagine how much better
a place the world would
be if some of the lessons
we have learned and
achievements we have
made here at 241 Royal
Parade could be
translated to a broader
world environment.* –
Simon Obendorf, student,
1995

*Although the time
commitments and
responsibilities haven't
always been easy, my
grades have suffered, my
family thinks I've forgotten
who they are and I'm sure
most people still have no*

idea of what I actually did as President, if I could come back to IH as a fresher and do it all again I would. IH really is an incredible place and I've loved being part of its community. – Bec Dutton, student president, 2012

Australian universities welcome international students in record numbers, the role of International House remains as relevant as ever. In these pages, Professor Frank Larkins provides a significant contribution to understanding that mission and thinking about its prospects. – Professor Glyn Davis, Vice-Chancellor, University of Melbourne

[International House Melbourne 1957-2016](#) celebrates the history of a remarkable institution, expertly written by Professor Larkins.

History / Presidents / Political Science

[Second Acts: Presidential Lives and Legacies after the White House](#) by Mark Updegrove (Lyons Press)

Winner of Foreword Magazine's 2006 Silver Award for Political Science Book of the Year.

F. Scott Fitzgerald once wrote, "There are no second acts in American lives",

but more and more, our former presidents are proving him wrong. No longer fading into the background upon leaving the highest office in the land, ex-presidents perform valuable services as elder statesmen and international emissaries – and by pursuing their own agendas. From Eisenhower taking Kennedy to the woodshed (literally) on the Bay of Pigs crisis, to Carter earning the Nobel Peace Prize, to Bush Sr. and Clinton joining forces in an unlikely partnership for tsunami and Hurricane Katrina relief, Mark Updegrove in [Second Acts](#) examines the increasingly important roles that former presidents assume in our nation and throughout the world. Updegrove started his career as a marketing associate for the Book of the Month Club in New York. From there he began working for Time, Inc where he worked for twelve years, the last ten of which were spent at *TIME* magazine. In 2001 Updegrove accepted the position of publisher at *Newsweek*, where he remained until 2002. He currently is an executive at Yahoo! based in Toronto.

Through interviews with former presidents, first ladies, family members, friends, and staffers, [Second Acts](#) also delves into the very human stories that play out as the modern ex-presidents – from Truman to Clinton – adjust to life after the White House and attempt to shape their historical legacies.

Former presidents have been likened to Cinderella after the ball. In this intimate, often surprising

group portrait, Mark Updegrove reveals how our ex-presidents since Truman have dealt with the loss of power that is their pumpkin. From Ike struggling to master the intricacies of the dial tone, to LBJ raging like Lear on the Perdenales [River], to Jimmy Carter, the Extra President – Updegrove gives us riveting history by twilight. His evening stars cast a memorable glow. – Richard Norton Smith, president historian, Scholar in Residence, George Mason University

Mark Updegrove's [Second Acts](#) is a fascinating read about a subject that has been neglected for too long. It is history at its best; a well researched and well told narrative that illuminates the recent past in surprisingly unexpected ways. Filled with wit as well as wisdom, [Second Acts](#) is a delight. – Don Carleton, Director, University of Texas Center for American History

Mark K. Updegrove's [Second Acts](#) is a smart and provocative look at the most exclusive club in America – ex-presidents. Highly recommended! – Douglas Brinkley, Professor

of History and Director of the Theodore Roosevelt Center at Tulane University

As life expectancy increases, U.S. presidents are living longer out of office than ever before. But the post-White House lives of the presidents since Truman have been a mixed bag, according to this creative work by Updegrove, former publisher of Newsweek. Updegrove delineates how these men, formerly the world's most powerful, coped with their new status, earned a living and tried to shape their legacies. Lyndon B. Johnson became depressed, and overate and smoked, despite an earlier heart attack. Jimmy Carter found a new purpose in his humanitarian and diplomatic activities. Some of the book's most surprising moments come in the accounts of the immediate post-WWII presidents ... for those interested in the former presidents, this popular history will do the trick. – Publishers Weekly

For most of our history, ex-presidents were expected

to, and usually did, retire to private life and relative obscurity.... Jefferson, as the 'Sage of Monticello,' exercised considerable influence over his Republican successors but did so behind the scenes. Recently, however, it has been accepted and even expected for former presidents to put their talents to public use. Updegrave, former publisher of Newsweek, partially attributes this to the financial security guaranteed to former presidents, including lucrative pensions, book contracts, and honoraria. Freed from financial concerns, they can devote themselves to public endeavors. Utilizing interviews with former presidents and their associates, the author examines the activities of chief executives from Truman to Clinton after they left the White House. Clinton and the elder Bush concentrated on disaster-relief efforts. Nixon tried to influence foreign policy, and Carter has combined both charitable efforts with offering advice on foreign policy. Updegrave writes with a breezy, easily

digestible prose. – Jay Freeman, *Booklist*

... entertaining and illuminating... – *The Washington Post*

... lively accounts.... This engrossing book [is] Highly recommended for public libraries. – *Library Journal*
...revealing in detail and context – *Kirkus Reviews*

In [Second Acts](#), the first narrative history of the modern post-presidency, Updegrave makes a refreshingly unique contribution to literature on the American presidents.

Literature & Fiction

[Mary B: A Novel](#) by Katherine J. Chen (Random House)

Named a 'best summer read' by *Newsday*, *Bustle*, and *Family Circle*

The overlooked middle sister in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* casts off her prim exterior and takes center stage in [Mary B](#), a fresh retelling of the classic novel.

What is to be done with Mary Bennet? She possesses neither the beauty of her eldest sister, Jane, nor the high-spirited wit of second-born Lizzy. Even compared to her frivolous younger siblings, Kitty and Lydia, Mary knows she is lacking in the ways that matter for single, not-so-well-to-do women in nineteenth-century England who must secure their futures through the finding of a husband. As her sisters wed, one by

one, Mary pictures herself growing old, a spinster with no estate to run or children to mind, dependent on the charity of others. At least she has the silent rebellion and secret pleasures of reading and writing to keep her company.

But even her fictional creations are no match for the scandal, tragedy, and romance that eventually visit Mary's own life. In [Mary B](#), readers are transported beyond the center of the ballroom to discover that wallflowers are sometimes the most intriguing guests at the party. Beneath Mary's plain appearance and bookish demeanor simmers an inner life brimming with passion, humor, and imagination – and a voice that demands to be heard. Set before, during, and after the events of *Pride and Prejudice*, Katherine J. Chen's vividly original debut novel, [Mary B](#), pays homage to a beloved classic while envisioning a life that is difficult to achieve in any era: that of a truly independent woman.

Chen is a graduate of Princeton University; this is her first novel.

The best part about Mary's star turn is that it bears little relation to the fates of her sisters. She's a simmering, churning, smart woman determined to concoct an independent life. – The Washington Post
Pride and Prejudice's beloved story is re-spun through the eyes of mousy, overlooked –

and now feminist – middle child, Mary. – Family Circle

A new, wholly original perspective on the classic ... Chen's novel gives fans and non-fans a heroine who seeks a rich, independent life, in spite of the limits society has placed on her. This is the ultimate Austen adaptation for our time. – Real Simple
Watching [Mary] come into her own is a delight. – People

Charming and smart ... Mary's narration is a heedless downhill pleasure – plush, ironic and illuminating. – Newsday

Ingenious ... [Mary B](#) is a tribute not just to Austen but to defiant women of any era. – USA Today
*Perhaps not even a newly discovered Austen manuscript could exceed the delicious pleasure of [Mary B](#). From an unswept corner of literature, Katherine J. Chen has conjured a heroine whose story is heartbreaking, hilarious, and, finally, thrilling. [Mary B](#) is a delight. – Susan Choi, Pulitzer Prize finalist and author of *American**

Woman and My Education
Katherine J. Chen has dipped into *Pride and Prejudice* to pluck out and celebrate the seemingly most unpromising of the Bennet sisters. In giving Mary Bennet a resonant voice of her own, Chen has fashioned a luminous and enlightening novel that will entrance even, or especially, those who have not read Jane Austen's masterpiece. – John Banville, Man Booker Prize-winning author of *The Sea and Mrs. Osmond*
[Mary B](#) is a retelling of *Pride and Prejudice* from the point of view of one of Elizabeth Bennet's sisters. It is a retelling for our time – bold, provocative, and thrilling. Bravo! – Gish Jen, author of *The Love Wife* and *World and Town*
Elegant, imaginative, and empathetic, Katherine J. Chen's novel reimagines Austen's universe with humor and heart. – Jennifer duBois, author of *Cartwheel* and *A Partial History of Lost Causes*
[A] charming and thoroughly satisfying debut ... Chen's lively retelling proves that centuries after its creation, Mary's story deserves to

be told. – Publishers Weekly
In a debut that encompasses events before, during, and after Austen's [*Pride and Prejudice*], introverted Mary knows she'll have to marry, escapes the pressure through a love of reading and writing, and bears witness to a scandal that brings out her strong-minded independence. Janeites, don't miss. – Library Journal
[This] fresh novel of manners ... is a reimagining of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* from the perspective of the quiet middle sister, Mary Bennet.... But here, Mary is shaped into a feminist hero.... Chen's work is compelling. – Kirkus Reviews
Mary Bennet, the awkward middle sister, finally gets to tell her own story in an acerbic, surprising debut novel. – Shelf Awareness

[Mary B](#) delivers a surprising new perspective on a classic. Ingenious, thrilling, bold, and lively, it is *Pride and Prejudice* reimagined for the feminist era.

Literature & Fiction

The Occasional Virgin: A Novel by Hanan al-Shaykh (Pantheon)

In **The Occasional Virgin**, acclaimed writer Hanan al-Shaykh follows the tumultuous lives and sometimes shocking choices of women successful in their careers but unlucky in love. Al-Shaykh, an award-winning journalist, novelist, and playwright, is the author of several short-story collections.

On a sunny beach on the Italian Riviera, two thirty-something women, Yvonne and Huda, relax by the sparkling sea. But despite the setting, as their vacation unfolds, their complicated pasts seep through to the idyllic present. Both women spent their childhoods in Lebanon – Yvonne raised in a Christian family, Huda in a Muslim one – and they now find themselves torn between the traditional worlds they were born into and the successful professional identities they've created.

Three months later, when Huda (a theater director from Toronto) visits Yvonne (an advertising executive) in London, a chance encounter with a man at Speaker's Corner leads to profound repercussions for them both. As **The Occasional Virgin** continues, each woman will undertake her own quest for love and romance, revenge and fulfillment.

*Brilliant! **The Occasional Virgin** is a modern Jane Austen comedy – wise, witty, and unexpectedly profound. I loved it. – Alberto Manguel
A refreshing, thought-*

*provoking look at the weight of history on the lives we build for ourselves.... Al-Shaykh's prose invites readers into the vivid imagery of [her two protagonists'] minds as they grapple with religion, family, relationships, and their own identities; both are complex, fully realized characters. – Booklist
Irony and iconoclasm are the orders of the day in al-Shaykh's bittersweet tale of friendship and disillusionment.... Al-Shaykh, who has drawn both admiration and condemnation in her native Lebanon for frank depictions of women's sexuality and criticism of women's powerlessness in traditional social structures, continues to grapple with these issues in ways both farcical and profound. It's the small moments – of both absurdity and genuine pathos – that will remain with readers, as Yvonne and Huda struggle to reconcile where they came from with who they've become. – Publishers Weekly
Novelist and memoirist al-Shaykh delivers an elegant story of a friendship that is*

anything but easy.... [The] novel is full of quiet regrets as it speaks gracefully to the challenges of friendship, challenges that threaten to drive the two women apart but that, in the end, instead strengthen their bond. Another winning book by one of the most distinguished Arabic-language writers at work today. – Kirkus Reviews
Lebanese-born, Cairo-educated, and London-based, al-Shaykh writes piercingly about Middle East upheaval and especially women in the Arab-Muslim world. Somewhere along the French Riviera, two young women from Beirut – Muslim-raised Huda and Christian-raised Yvonne – reflect on their tumultuous lives and struggles with work and love. – Library Journal

Witty and wry, [The Occasional Virgin](#) is a poignant and perceptive tale for our time.

Literature & Fiction / Mysteries & Thrillers

[The Sinners](#) (A Quinn Colson Novel) by Ace Atkins (G.P Putnam's Sons)

In the new novel from New York Times bestselling crime master Ace Atkins, [The Sinners](#), violence comes in many forms...

and this time it may be more than Quinn Colson can handle.

Atkins is the author of twenty-three books, including eight Quinn Colson novels, the first two of which, *The Ranger* and *The Lost Ones*, were nominated for the Edgar Award for Best Novel. Before turning to fiction, he was a correspondent for the St. Petersburg Times, and a crime reporter for the *Tampa Tribune*.

In [The Sinners](#) the Pritchards had never been worth a damn – an evil, greedy family who made their living dealing drugs and committing mayhem. Years ago, Colson's late uncle had put the clan's patriarch in prison, but now he's getting out, with revenge, power, and family business on his mind. To make matters worse, a shady trucking firm with possible ties to the Gulf Coast syndicate has moved into Tibbehah, and they have their own methods of intimidation. Atkins delivers evil doings, riveting suspense, and major life changes for his magnetic young hero in the eighth novel of the series, [The Sinners](#). After tempestuous relationships with two of Tibbehah County, Mississippi's most alluring women, former U.S. Army Ranger Quinn Colson is about to get married to another – delicate beauty and veteran ER nurse Maggie Powers.

In [The Sinners](#), Colson is hoping for a relatively quiet run-up to the nuptials, aside from the usual drug-induced insanity on the streets, immigrant-bashing local politicians, and his mother's Elvis-inspired obsession with wedding details. But the reappearance

of Heath Pritchard, who was imprisoned decades earlier by Colson's Uncle Hamp, his beleaguered predecessor as Tibbehah County sheriff, takes things to an entirely different level. Pritchard's car-racing nephews, Tyler and Cody, have built up a lucrative and highly illegal (in Mississippi) business as growers of high-quality marijuana, which they supply to a drug kingpin in nearby Memphis. To date, they have abided by an uneasy agreement with tough-as-nails Fannie Hathcoek, the knockout proprietor of the local strip joint Vienna's Place, to stay out of the rest of the regional drug trade.

But uber-redneck Heath Pritchard plans to change all that, convinced of his family's divine right to plunder, screw, and generally raise hell as they please. His amoral campaign of chaos and revenge begins with the grisly killing of one of Fannie's employees. Next, the Pritchard nephews hijack a truck carrying contraband for the Dixie Mafia, setting off a spiral of backstabbing and rapidly escalating violence.

Worst of all, Colson's childhood buddy Boom Kimbrough happens to be the driver of that truck. A massive former football player who lost an arm in Afghanistan and now uses an artificial limb, Boom has unwittingly stumbled into the midst of the mayhem.

But Colson's ability to protect Boom is limited, given his evolving understanding of the case and the recent departure of his trusted former deputy, the expert sharpshooter and no-nonsense

lawwoman Lillie Virgil, for a new job as a federal marshal in Memphis.

Mississippi's rural Tibbehah County – the evocative setting for Ace Atkins' superior series about Quinn Colson, a former Army Ranger turned sheriff – is the crossroads of all things good and evil... Action-packed... Tibbehah County and the town of Jericho are small areas with big-city problems as Atkins maintains the sense of community that flows through the region. – Associated Press
[A] boisterous series. – Marilyn Stasio, The New York Times Book Review
The Quinn Colson series just keeps getting better and better. Its blend of country noir and badass humor is as smooth as three fingers of Gentleman Jack.... If you like country noir, and you haven't visited Tibbehah County, you're overdue for a road trip. – Booklist, starred review
With it's Elmore Leonard-feel and a cast of unforgettable character, this is noir with a deep South edge. – Parkersburg News and Sentinel
In Quinn Colson, bestselling author Ace

Atkins has created an American hero in a time when we need him. – C. J. Box

Ace Atkins's Quinn Colson series is, quite simply, the best in crime fiction today – and also so much more. With a rich cast of characters, and a hero we can count on, these are tales of morality and desperation, of shocking violence and the enduring resilience of family and community. And the emotional places they take us make them unforgettable. – Megan Abbott

Quinn Colson is my kind of guy. I would follow him anywhere. – Lee Child

A brilliantly crafted and deeply satisfying new Quinn Colson novel from "one of the best crime writers at work today" (Michael Connelly), [The Sinners](#) is Atkins at the top of his game, sure to enthrall his ever-growing body of readers and dazzle those just discovering him.

Literature & Fiction / Mysteries & Thrillers

[Read Me: A Novel](#) by Leo Benedictus (Twelve)

Hitchcock's *Rear Window* meets Messud's *The Woman Upstairs* in this unnerving, well-crafted novel [Read Me](#) by Leo Benedictus, which takes readers deep into the mind of a serial stalker and, through him, the lives of his

unsuspecting victims.

Benedictus worked as an advertising copywriter and as a freelance sub-editor for *The Guardian*. He is currently a freelance feature writer for *The Guardian* and writer-in-residence at Holland Park School, London.

Try it yourself. Go out, pick somebody and watch them. Take your phone and a notebook. Persist. What begins as a confluence of yours and another person's journeys, on the train maybe or leaving a cinema, gets into an entanglement. You follow, feeling that it's not really following because you're going the same way, then when they at last reach their office you feel the clutch of a goodbye. It's normal. But how many times do you think the person being followed has been you?

[Read Me](#) is a seductive, haunting novel that holds a sinister mirror up to the ways in which we observe, judge, and influence people. Benedictus' prose commands and draws readers into the dark, manipulative mind of a serial stalker as he targets women across London, escalating his efforts until he settles on Frances – a bright young professional whose career is set to take off – whose life he proceeds to unravel from the inside, out.

A fascinating, disturbing, and original thriller that erases the boundaries of the genre and draws challenging new ones. – Sophie Hannah, New York Times bestselling author of The Monogram Murders

Beautiful writing and a modest, pensive protagonist contrast grisly violence as we follow a stalker through a maze of streets and shops. Intrigued by those more colorful than he, drawn to the vibrant and vivacious, the narrator is trapped in his irrelevance and we inside his head as he records the movements and the moments of his more ostentatious prey. A brilliant and goosebumpy read! – Susan Crawford, bestselling author of *The Other Widow* and *The Pocket Wife*

[Read Me](#) offers a salacious, disturbing, and increasingly focused look into the mind of a stalker. – Booklist

Ingeniously nasty... reminiscent of Vladimir Nabokov and Patricia Highsmith... Expect to be provoked by a teasing metafictional game. – *The Sunday Times*

A word of warning: do not pick up this novella late at night. Not if you'd like to sleep any time soon... Darkly addictive. – Hephzibah Anderson, *The Mail on Sunday*

The contrast between the narrator's tone and the

unsettling nature of his actions creates a host of tension... [Read Me](#) suggests a reimagining of John Fowles' *The Collector* for an age of social media, constant surveillance, and toxic masculinity. – Kirkus

A fiendishly clever book, though not for the soft-hearted... You'll find yourself turning pages in the most disturbing kind of grip. – *Sydney Morning Herald*

Another clever, cutting riff on the book-within-a-book... this strangely congenial thriller-cum-treatise ends on a note of provocative ambiguity. – *The Guardian*

Claustrophobic intensity... makes it a memorable and rewarding, if far from comfortable, experience. – *The Sunday Express*

A chilling rumination on power, manipulation, complicity, and anonymity, [Read Me](#) exposes just how vulnerable we are to the whims of others – people we may not even know.

Philosophy

[A Good Look at Evil](#) by Abigail L. Rosenthal (Wipf & Stock)

We meet with evil in the ordinary course of experience, as we try to live our life stories. It's not a myth. It's a mysterious

but quite real phenomenon. How can we recognize it? How can we learn to resist it? Amazingly, philosophers have not been much help. Despite the claim of classical rationalists that evil is 'ignorance,' evil-doers can be extremely intelligent, showing an understanding of ourselves that surpasses our own self-understanding. Meanwhile, contemporary philosophers, in the English-speaking world and on the Continent, portray good and evil as social constructs, which leaves us puzzled and powerless when we have to face the real thing. Thinkers like Hannah Arendt have construed evil as blind conformity to institutional roles – hence 'banal' – but evil-doers have shown exceptional creativity in bending and reshaping institutions to conform to their will.

Author Abigail L. Rosenthal is Professor Emerita at Brooklyn College of The City University of New York.

[A Good Look at Evil](#), a **second edition**, although not marked as such, takes a view of good as the working out of one's own life story, and a contrasting view of evil as the deliberate thwarting of that work, whether in oneself or in another.

The sorts of worked-out life stories advocated in [A Good Look at Evil](#) are not to be thought of as fictions. They exhibit a serious commitment to practical reason. However, in Chapter One, the rationality of what people call an ideal story is distinguished not only from fiction but also from the sort of rationality that is just shrewd economy in

the choice of means to get to goals that are fixed incorrigibly. Personal identity is found in the acts of living and defending one's story. Evil is first encountered as a deliberate and knowing threat to personal identity.

Chapter One of [A Good Look at Evil](#) sets forth the special kind of nonfiction rationality that belongs to the living of a story. A nonfiction story is factual, yet shot through with evaluations. The next step is to defend its definition of the good life against the philosophical objection that facts and values must be hopelessly estranged.

In Chapter Two, the method is explained by which the concepts defended in Chapter One are shown to have practical application in concrete cases. For each kind of evil explored, a 'pure type' is constructed, a hypothetical agent who aims at that kind of evil – not merely stumbles into it.

These first two chapters form Part One, "Conceptual Foundations."

In Part Two, "Evil Under Wraps;" the method of pure types sees its first two applications. Chapter Three, "Going to the Bad;" is about personal dissolution. Chapter Four, "Selling Out," deals with institutional corruption.

Part Three concerns "Evil In the Daylight:" Its topic is genocide, which cannot ordinarily take place without the sanction of an entire culture or its government. The moral assessment of agents who do evil at the behest of their culture or government is a very difficult

thing. It must be carried through nevertheless, if moral standards are not to collapse relativistically into mere cultural norms, norms that may themselves sanction genocide.

Chapter Five, "The Types of Genocide," tries therefore to set forth and resolve the special difficulties involved in the struggle to rediscover and mark out the universal moral lines in that place where cultures confront and challenge each other's right to exist and to flourish – the vast and obscure place of the human imagination called 'history.'

Chapter Six, "Banality and Originality," focuses on the Holocaust. It deals partly with objections to such a focus, objections on the ground that the Holocaust is not a special or extreme case of the evil of genocide. It is also concerned to take up some themes associated with the name of Hannah Arendt: the partial delegitimation of the Nuremberg and Eichmann trials; the alleged ordinariness of the Nazi perpetrator; the alleged moral complicity of his victim.

Chapter Seven, "Thinking Like a Nazi," then deals directly with the Nazi as a pure type of genocidal evil. By his deliberate acts, the ideal stories of persons who live, as everyone does, embedded in their cultures, are deliberately and consciously destroyed.

Part Four, "Particulars: Living One's Story," contains two new essays, appearing in [A Good Look at Evil](#) for the first time. What role do they play?

Chapter Eight, "Spoiling One's Story: the Case of Hannah Arendt," returns to Arendt, this time as a person whose story deserves to be studied in its own right. Since writing Chapter Six, new material has come out shedding light on her allegations of complicity on the part of the victims of the Holocaust and also on the alleged 'banality' of Adolf Eichmann, as the man in charge of making sure that the Holocaust got done.

Chapter Nine, "God and the Care for One's Story," also deals with new material, but this time the author is the person supplying it. When one has argued, in the course of many chapters, that we live stories, and that we ought to live them intelligently and defend them against attack, some readers at least will wonder whether the author has any views about the influence of the divine in the stories we live. If she thinks there might be such a thing as Providential intervention, could she construct a 'pure type' to show what such intervention might look like?

Part Four is called "Particulars" – here the method of pure types is largely set aside. After all, Hannah Arendt is not a theoretical construction. She was a real woman, a respected philosopher and political thinker, whose influence lives on after her. In Chapter Nine, this use of real-life persons to illustrate the story continues. This time Rosenthal is the one who lives it, it is her story, and the occurrences in the story that she takes to be evidence of divine intervention are first spelled out and then defended.

Abigail Rosenthal proposes a new way of understanding one of the oldest mysteries – the nature of evil. Drawing on wide literary and philosophical resources, Rosenthal proposes that narrative self-understanding is the key to a good life. She traces the implications of this idea for understanding various types of evil, including the ultimate evil of Nazi genocide – which, she argues, cannot be understood in Arendtian terms as a kind of banality. Highly personal and original, Rosenthal's work offers new ways of grappling with some of the largest ethical questions. – Adam Kirsch, author of *The Global Novel: Writing the World in the 21st Century*

Rosenthal pinpoints the characteristic feature of evil – at least the leading type of evil – that distinguishes it from what is only morally wrong or very, very bad. It is based on her basic notion of an ideal 'life story' or plot. She extends both concepts from individual victims to races and populations as victims. [T]here is nothing banal or ordinary about

evil, the intentional disrupting of the victim's 'ideal thread' or plot.... In a fascinating new essay, Rosenthal revisits Hannah Arendt ... applying her 'plot' concept to Arendt herself in light of what is known about Arendt's long intellectual and personal relationship with Heidegger. Rosenthal argues that despite a splendid recovery from early adversity, Arendt went on to 'spoil' her own life story. And in a concluding piece, Rosenthal shows from her own experience how one can have reason to believe that a person's life story has been co-authored by God. – William G. Lycan, author of *Real Conditionals*

It is a most compelling and creative work. Rosenthal is analyzing the 'stories' that people tell us about themselves, in terms of both their lives and their work. She does so in an effort to understand genocidal evil-doers, both those who perpetrate and collaborate with it and those who cover up such crimes. – Phyllis Chesler, author of *An American Bride in Kabul: A Memoir*

As a person who wholeheartedly subscribes to the idea that we must be constantly attentive to, and increasingly watchful over, the `plots' of our own unfolding stories, I found Abigail Rosenthal's ' a welcome, revealing, and indispensable book about the slippery crevices of the moral life. I hope it is translated into many languages. Everyone should read it. – Gail Godwin, author of Heart: A Personal Journey Through Its Myths and Meanings

[A Good Look at Evil](#) maps the actual terrain – of lived ideas and situations – showing how to recognize evil for what it is: the perennial and present threat to a good life.

Religion & Spirituality / Hebrew Bible / Series

[The Origin of Israelite Zion Theology](#) by Antti Laato, with Series Editors Andrew Mein & Claudia V. Camp (**The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies Series**: T&T Clark)

[The Origin of Israelite Zion Theology](#) is an examination of Zion theology and how it arises in the book of Psalms. Antti Laato's starting-point is that the Hebrew Bible is the product of the exilic and postexilic times, which nonetheless contains older traditions that have played a significant role in the development of the text.

Laato is Professor of Hebrew Bible at Abo Akedemi University, Finland.

Laato seeks out these older mythical traditions related to Zion using a comparative methodology and looking at Biblical traditions alongside Ugaritic texts and other ancient Near Eastern material. As such Laato provides a historical background for Zion theology which he can apply more broadly to the Psalms.

In addition, Laato argues that Zion-related theology in the Psalms is closely related to two events recounted in the Hebrew Bible. First, the architectural details of the Temple of Solomon, which can be compared with older mythical Zion-related traditions. Second, the religious traditions related to the reigns of David and Solomon such as the Ark Narrative, which ends with David's transfer of the Ark to Jerusalem. From this Laato in [The Origin of Israelite Zion Theology](#) builds an argument for a possible setting in Jerusalem at the time of David and Solomon for the Zion theology that emerges in the Psalms.

The aim of [The Origin of Israelite Zion Theology](#) is to deal with the early roots of the Zion theology as it is transmitted in the Hebrew Bible and especially in the book of Psalms. Zion theology is not a given concept in the Hebrew Bible, but a meta-level scholarly concept. In Laato's view, empirical models indicate that the Hebrew Bible can be regarded as a collection of writings in which older traditions have been preserved and actualized through editing and linguistic

reworking in a way analogous to the literary development of the Akkadian epics. This means that older thematic patterns can play a significant role in later literary works.

Early Israelite concepts of god and religious structure shared similar parameters and expressions as, for example, those found at Ugarit. Laato is not claiming that we are dealing with direct borrowing, but rather with analogous thinking in the West Semitic religious milieu. Such a comparative analysis has its risks. Ugaritic material originates many hundreds of years earlier than the biblical books were composed into their final forms.

In [The Origin of Israelite Zion Theology](#) Laato argues that every interpretive model is based on several 'would be' statements which concern literary and redaction criticism, form history, tradition history and historical circumstances under which the texts have been written and transmitted. Therefore, he proceeds in the following way: In Chapter 3 he argues for one logical possible world for the historical circumstances which prevailed in Jerusalem at the time of David (election of Jerusalem) and Solomon (the building of the Temple). While such a possible world is certainly not the only alternative, it nevertheless functions as background for his thesis on Zion theology outlined in [The Origin of Israelite Zion Theology](#) and further stimulates scholarship by presenting one option for discussion.

Having clarified the outlines of the possible world concerning the beginning of the Jerusalemite temple at the time of Solomon, he examines the origin of the Zion theology in relation to this possible world. In Chapters 4-6 Laato works like an archaeologist who first digs the youngest layers and then proceeds to dig deeper into the older tradition layers. In Chapter 4 he detects new impulses which the building project of Solomon with the aid of Phoenician assistance gave to Israelite Yahwism. He argues that the imagery of the Storm-god became popular in Yahwism and that this imagery was also reflected in the Temple architecture and iconography. In Chapter 5 he takes one step backwards in history and discusses the ways in which the Shilonite cult with the Ark of Covenant influenced the Jerusalemite cult. Laato argues that the cult in Shiloh was based on the identification between 'El and Yahweh. He discusses the anti-Baal trend in early Israel more closely in Chapter 6. The focus in Chapter 6 is built on the analysis of Psalm 68.

In the summary and conclusions, Laato says that [The Origin of Israelite Zion Theology](#) the origin of Zion theology can be seen from larger historical perspectives where the focus was placed on the reigns of David and Solomon. The main source, the Hebrew Bible, is a collection of scriptures which received their final form in the exilic and postexilic period.

This empirical perspective to the tradition-historical investigations

concerning Jerusalem is relevant in the Hebrew Bible. Jerusalem – which in the present form of the Hebrew Bible is the only place where the sacrificial cult of Yahweh is possible – is related to other cult sites in three basic patterns: (1) from cult place X to Jerusalem, i.e. the cult which was once conducted in a legitimate way in another cult place was moved to Jerusalem (e.g. the Ark from Shiloh to Jerusalem). (2) Jerusalem contra cult place X, i.e. another cult place is criticized because it is regarded as illegitimate beside the legitimate cult place of Jerusalem (e.g. Bethel). (3) From Sinai to Jerusalem, i.e. the Mosaic Torah which was revealed on Sinai is seen to get its legitimation in the cult of Jerusalem.

Empirical models give some interesting examples of cross-cultural translations where an old religious tradition has been adopted in a new religious context.

An important tendency in the Deuteronomistic History is to argue that David and Solomon managed to establish something which could be called 'an Israelite Empire.' David and Solomon – according to Laato's tentative hypothesis – managed to establish a status quo in the Land of Canaan which was accepted by Egypt. This is indicated by the marriage between Solomon and the daughter of the Pharaoh. The situation was apparently politically suitable for Egypt which had its own problems in foreign and domestic affairs.

Yahweh 'El was worshipped in Shiloh, which indicates the early nature of the Israelite religion – something which is also related to the theophoric name of Israel. The results outlined in Chapters 4 and 5 demonstrated that, on the one hand, Yahweh was related to the Storm-god – and Baal was regarded as the Storm-god sui generis in the West Semitic religions – but, on the other hand, Yahweh was identified with 'El in Shiloh. Therefore, in Chapter 6, the discussion focused on the anti-Baal trend in early Israel and its implication on the imagery of the Storm-god used in psalms. The question posed was whether the use of the imagery of the Storm-god was an example of assimilation or occupation. This led to the analysis of Psalm 68, an example of religious traditions which originated from the Transjordan area and which were recontextualized in Jerusalem. In this psalm, an anti-Baal trend is visible. Laato explains this as the worshippers of 'El reacting at the end of the Late Bronze Age to the popular myths that 'El allowed Baal to take care of the lower heaven and to be responsible for rains and fertility. Psalm 68 contains primitive rhetoric. It describes the theophany of Elohim with the aid of the Storm-god imagery and then identifies this Elohim with Yahweh or 'El.

[The Origin of Israelite Zion Theology](#) is a deep analytical study; scholars who do not accept Laato's historical conclusions may still find his tradition-historical analysis meaningful.

The book will certainly stimulate further scholarship. More studies are needed to clarify the archaeological evidence from Jerusalem as well as the historical and religion historical background of the reign of David and Solomon. Secondly, there are other interpretive models of how the imagery of the Storm-god to be investigated and understood. Thirdly, it is important to clarify how monolatry was understood in early Israel. There is no need to accept simple evolutionary lines from polytheism to monolatry and from monolatry to intolerant monolatry and finally to monotheism. If the United Monarchy was a glorious period in the history of Israel when the worship of Yahweh was glorified in Jerusalem by the building of the Temple, then the concept of the divine council may have been an early expression of monolatry in Israel which nevertheless contained a tolerant attitude towards other deities worshipped by other peoples.

Religion & Spirituality / Tibetan Buddhism

[Steps to the Great Perfection](#): The Mind-Training Tradition of the Dzogchen Masters by Jigme Lingpa, translated by Cortland Dahl, with a foreword by Tulku Thondup (Snow Lion)

[Steps to the Great Perfection](#) *is a treasure of profound teachings revealed by the greatest masters of the Dzogchen lineage. Synthesizing both common and esoteric meditations, it offers*

profound trainings for both beginners and advanced meditators to attain high realizations. Cortland Dahl has offered a great service for English readers of Dharma by presenting another ambrosia-like volume with great clarity and beauty. – Tulku Thondup, from the foreword

[Steps to the Great Perfection](#) is a compilation of teachings on the seven contemplations, an ancient system of mind-training/lojong teachings that has been preserved as part of a rare set of instructions on Dzogchen, or the Great Perfection.

[Steps to the Great Perfection](#) is unique because although the lojong teachings of the Kadam tradition are well known, this is the first time the mind-training teachings from the Dzogchen tradition have been presented in an English translation, and most Western scholars and practitioners are unaware that such mind-training techniques even exist in Dzogchen. The contemplations themselves are vividly described, and some unfold as dramatic stories in which the meditator imagines himself or herself as the main character. Thus, they are quite accessible for beginning practitioners.

The author, Jigme Lingpa (1730-1798), was one of the most important masters of the Nyingma tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. He and the great fourteenth-

century master Longchen Rabjam (1308-1363), with whom he was closely linked through visionary experience, are known as the 'two omniscient masters, father and son.' Jigme Lingpa was a tertön, or discoverer of treasure teachings, and revealed the Longchen Nyingtik, one of the most important cycles of meditative practice in the Nyingma School.

The mind-training practices contained in the Dzogchen tradition of Tibetan Buddhism have never before been presented in the English language. The main text translated in [Steps to the Great Perfection](#), *The Steps to Liberation*, offers instructions that are pithy and direct, and experiential rather than scholarly. The contemplations on core Buddhist principles like impermanence and karma are intended for beginning meditators. They distill the most essential teachings of the Buddha into a practical system that can be easily implemented in a daily meditation practice. At the same time, they bring together the most foundational Buddhist teachings with the profound methods of the Vajrayana (the esoteric teachings of Buddhist tantra). This is the hallmark of Dzogchen mind training and what sets it apart from other mind-training lineages.

Tulku Thondup says in his foreword to [Steps to the Great Perfection](#) that according to Buddhism, every being is a composite of mind and body. Our mind is who we are. Our body is a precious but temporary abode where our mind lives and functions as long as we are alive. As soon as we die, our mind, or

consciousness, leaves our body and takes rebirth. Whether this rebirth is happy or painful depends solely on whether the effects of our past karmic deeds are positive or negative. The important point is that if we train our mind on the path of profound teachings, such as Dzogchen, our mind will become free from emotional flames and karmic bondage and will awaken to its innate wisdom.

The main text in [Steps to the Great Perfection](#) is the teaching on the seven mind trainings entitled *The Steps to Liberation*, composed by Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa. *The Steps to Liberation* explains the seven mind trainings revealed in two Dzogchen tantras entitled The Sole Offspring and the Precious Copper Letters, and in their commentaries by Garab Dorje and Longchen Rabjam.

Mind trainings are generally regarded as preliminary trainings that are done before the main body of meditations. However, as [Steps to the Great Perfection](#) teaches, readers can also practice any of the seven mind trainings as a main body of meditation by uniting it with esoteric meditation exercises to accomplish higher attainments.

Cortland Dahl, the translator of [Steps to the Great Perfection](#) says in his introduction that in 2001 he moved from the United States to Nepal to study the Tibetan language and to spend time meditating in retreat. He had been practicing Buddhism for nearly ten years at that point. Over the course of those ten years, he learned of Tibet's four main

Buddhist lineages – the Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyü, and Geluk Schools – and of the great masters who had safeguarded these lineages for more than a thousand years. Perhaps more than any other set of teachings, he remembers being deeply moved by the mind-training teachings that were brought to Tibet in the eleventh century by the great Indian master Atisha (980–1054 GE).

In contrast to the complex philosophies of Mahayana Buddhism and the impenetrable imagery of the Vajrayana, he found the mind-training teachings to be refreshingly straightforward and accessible. They encourage people to open their hearts to the suffering of others and to make the awakening of all beings their primary mission in life. They even call into question people's mostly deeply held beliefs about themselves, about the world, and about the nature of experience. He struggled to put these teachings into practice but found in them an inexhaustible source of guidance and inspiration.

Jigme Lingpa wrote three commentaries on the preliminary practices. Two of the texts, *How to Practice* and *The Application of Mindfulness*, are pithy instructions on the outer and inner ngondro practices, respectively. In addition to *How to Practice* and *The Application of Mindfulness*, Jigme Lingpa wrote a more lengthy work entitled *The Steps to Liberation*. Once he began reading, he found a set of mind-training instructions that were entirely different from those

that he studied in other lineages. There was no mention of the traditional mind-training texts that he was already familiar with. Instead, there were references to the *Precious Copper Letters*, *the Child Scripture*, *the Luminous Tantra of Self-Manifesting Awareness*, and other scriptures that he had never heard of. The contemplations were also very different. There were discussions of important principles like impermanence and karma, yet along with these discussions were contemplations filled with symbolic imagery. These were not the typical visualizations found in other forms of Buddhist tantra either. He had never read anything quite like them, nor has he seen anything like them since.

The most striking difference, however, he found at the end of Jigme Lingpa's work. The seventh mind-training exercise departs from the format of the first six and extends into practices that work with the energies and channels of the subtle body, and even into explorations of the nature of awareness itself. These topics are typically found in advanced meditation manuals for those who have already undergone a lengthy training process, but here they were in a book on the preliminary practices. This glimpse opened his eyes to the wealth of mind-training teachings found in the Nyingma School and especially to those associated with the *Heart Essence of the Great Perfection*. There are many unique and interesting features of the Great Perfection mind-training teachings. In some ways, they are very similar to the Kadampa instructions. They are pithy and direct, and experiential

rather than scholarly. They also distill the most essential teachings of the Buddha into a practical system that can easily be implemented in a daily meditation routine, as do Atisha's instructions. At the same time, they bring together the most foundational Buddhist teachings with the incredibly profound methods of the Vajrayana (the esoteric teachings of Buddhist tantra). This is the hallmark of Dzogchen mind training and what sets it apart from other mind-training lineages.

In [Steps to the Great Perfection](#), readers will find translations of the root verse on the seven mind trainings from *The Tantra of the Sole Offspring*, along with commentaries on these practices by Garab Dorje, Longchenpa, and Jigme Lingpa.

The sevenfold mind training of the Dzogchen lineage is very important, since it gives us a practical set of instructions to help us to get in touch with the fundamental wisdom of the Buddhist path. In ancient times, it was often said that these foundational teachings are even more important than the advanced instructions of our tradition. I am very happy to see these important texts now appearing in the English language. They will be of great benefit to all those interested in the path of awakening. – Yongey

Mingyur Rinpoche, author of *Turning Confusion into Clarity*

The great vidyādhara Jigme Lingpa left an abundance of literary and instructional treasures for us – methods for awakening our hearts and freeing our minds. Among those, the sevenfold mind-training instructions presented in The Steps to Liberation are an especially powerful set of teachings that unite many of the key points of sutra and tantra in an utterly pragmatic way. I am therefore very happy and grateful that Cortland Dahl has made an excellent translation of these precious teachings available to the English-reading public. I encourage readers to take advantage of this wonderful opportunity to deepen and expand their compassion and wisdom.
– Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche, author of *Rebel Buddha: A Guide to a Revolution of Mind*

Aimed at beginners, this precious volume, profound and transformative, straightforward and accessible, will inspire readers in their meditative practice. With the translations in [Steps to the Great Perfection](#), readers will see the

unique perspective that each of these great masters brings to the same set of teachings.

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