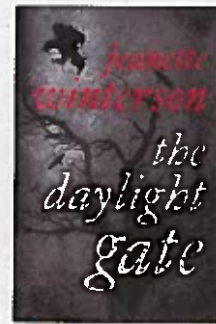


★ The Daylight Gate

Jeanette Winterson. Grove, \$24 (240p) ISBN 978-0-8021-2163-9

To open *The Daylight Gate* is to be thrust into an England most Americans will have trouble believing ever existed. It's a wild, superstitious place where the king (James I, Protestant son of the very Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots) has minions who prosecute (and, arguably, persecute) people suspected of witchcraft or Catholicism. Winterson starts with the historical record—the 1612 Lancashire Witch Trial really happened—and adds poetry, possibility, Shakespeare, Elizabethan Magus John Dee, a sexy priest on the run, a lifelong love between two women, and best of all, her version of real-life accused witch Alice Nutter. Using the fact that Nutter was from a different class than the group she was tried and executed with, Winterson creates a character straight out of fantasy. Alice is vividly beautiful, suspiciously young-looking, and while not a witch herself, acquainted with what witches call the “Left-Hand Path,” having worked with Dee on his alchemy and seen her female lover sell her soul to the devil, here called “the Dark Gentleman.” Disliked for her power and fearlessness—she rides astride and harbors suspected witches on her land—when the hunts for Catholics and witches converge, so too do her past and present. The book is short, violent (both torture and magic are depicted with full goriness), and absorbing. The language is simple and sometimes lovely, and to say that the book could have gone the extra mile and been a graphic novel is not to damn it, but to recognize the pleasure in its intensely visual qualities. *Agent: Heather Schroder, ICM. (Oct.)*



mons pulling them together in this well-crafted story of acceptance, forgiveness, and hope. McMillan (*Waiting to Exhale*) deftly weaves her tale of a black Los Angeles family's disharmony around the narratives of bickering sisters Betty Jean, Arlene, and Venetia as they watch their kids stumble into adulthood. BJ's drug-addled daughter, Trinetta—who lost custody of her baby girl—dumps two sons on her; meanwhile BJ's youngest son, Dexter, does prison time for a crime he won't admit to, and her eldest, Quentin, searches for himself. Arlene, a single mom who has a master's in psychology and harbors a painful secret, struggles with overprotecting her long-closeted gay son, Omar. And wealthy, God-fearing Venetia can't see what's plain to her spoiled kids and husband: that she's been ignoring her own needs and her crumbling marriage. Trinetta's strong-hearted kids lead the family back to each other—but McMillan's story belongs to the middle-aged steel magnolias who value loyalty above all. “I have prayed for all of us to come to our senses even though I know it's an ongoing process,” Venetia says. “We're not getting any younger and family is family.” *Agent: Molly Friedrich, Friedrich Agency. (Sept. 17)*

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ Killing Williamsburg

Bradley Spinelli. Le Chat Noir (Ingram, dist.), \$15.99 (240p) ISBN 978-0-615-80141-4

It is 1999 in Spinelli's dark debut novel, and people are killing themselves in alarming numbers in the increasingly hipster-dominated enclave of Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Benson, the book's 20-something, educated, and underemployed narrator, reacts with his customary detached cynicism to the gruesome trend, dismaying his live-in girlfriend Olive, who copes by starting a suicide hotline. Olive moves back home to San Francisco after people in the couple's circle begin to commit suicide, leaving Benson behind. He supplements his part-time job lighting parties by working as a “dancing boy” at the events, adding to the darkly carnivalesque vibe. The epidemic spreads into Manhattan, but the authorities and media remain strangely silent as hundreds of thousands die. Benson's cynicism turns into resilience as the world around him falls apart; he is

one of the misfits given the hard work of cleaning up after the dead. Spinelli offers sharp and stylish prose when describing the bizarre suicides, but allows info-dump exposition to interrupt the narrative flow. The life and times of a New York Gen-Xer don't necessarily hold much interest beyond that demographic, but Benson's nihilistic views may resonate with readers in their 20s facing an uncertain economic future. *(Sept.)*

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ Margot
Jillian Cantor. Riverhead, \$16 trade paper (352p) ISBN 978-1-59448-643-2

What if Anne Frank's sister Margot, instead of dying in Auschwitz, had survived and gone into hiding in America? Cantor's latest (after *The Transformation of Things*) posits this alternative scenario with a modern eye for symptoms of trauma and survivor's guilt. Wearing long sleeves even on hot days to cover her camp tattoo, Margot is passing as a gentile in 1950s America under the name “Margie Franklin,” avoiding both her father in Switzerland and her own tragic history. But after *The Diary of Anne Frank* is published by her dad and the movie version arrives in theaters, Margot's careful reconstruction of herself begins to fray. Joshua Rosenstein, the lawyer for whom she works as a secretary, asks for her help in finding Jews experiencing discrimination, further inflaming long-repressed memories. A troubled pair of love triangles figures in the book—one from Margot's teenage years in hiding and another in the law office; the first seems unfair to history and the second is a Holocaust survivor's version of Cinderella. But with Margot having been denied a happy ending in real life, Cantor is determined for her to find one here. *Agent: Jessica Regal, Jean V. Naggar Literary Agency. (Sept.)*

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ Confessions of Marie Antoinette
Juliet Grey. Ballantine, \$15 trade paper (484p) ISBN 978-0-345-52390-7

The third installment of Grey's Marie Antoinette trilogy, following *Days of Splendor*, *Days of Sorrow*, captures the final years of Louis XVI's reign through the eyes of the legendary Austrian woman who became the French queen and never actually said, “Let them eat cake.” The author's extensive research shows in her

detailed reconstruction of the political machinations that, over time, diminished the King's powers and turned the once-proud and ostentatious royal family into prisoners, stripped of dignity and privacy. Near the end, even their bread is crumbled before being served, to prevent anyone from smuggling messages inside, but Marie still manages to put on a brave face. As counterpoint, Grey depicts Parisian sculptress Louison Chabry, a real-life figure who encountered the French royals in October 1789 after participating in the renowned Women's March on Versailles. Amid the increasingly zealous and bloodthirsty revolutionaries, Chabry offers a more reasoned response, balancing her passion for change with compassion for the rulers who she believes are not the despicable tyrants portrayed in the rhetoric of the day. Historians will continue to debate whether Marie Antoinette was friend or foe to the French people, but Grey succeeds in bringing humanity and grace to the controversial queen. *Agent: Irene Goodman, the Irene Goodman Agency. (Sept.)*

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ The Governor's Lady
Robert Inman. John F. Blair (www.blairpub.com), \$26.95 (340p) ISBN 978-0-89587-608-9
Readers hoping for a savvy look inside the life of a politician will be disappointed by this simplistic tale of the trial by fire of Cooper Lanier, a new Southern (the state remains unnamed) governor; Lanier is both the daughter and wife of prior governors. With her husband Pickett gearing up for a White House run, Lanier has a chance to show what she has to offer the public after a narrow victory. It takes too long to get any handle on what she stands for—Inman, lazily, refers to Lanier's inaugural address, which she wrote herself, without presenting even a brief excerpt. And it's hard to be impressed with a chief executive who doesn't bother to read through her briefing book—a failure that comes back to bite her when she's handed her first crisis: her state is hit by a crippling snowstorm, but her plan to mobilize the National Guard is vetoed by her husband. Inman (*Captain Saturday*) doesn't sweat the details, and the psychodrama between Lanier and her

is to make any sense of his own condition. But that's fine; for all Chowder really craves, like the homeless guy on the corner, is an audience he can chirp at for the duration: “Hey, Junior Birdmen. I'm Paul Chowder and I'm here in the blindingness of noon near the chicken hut talking to you about the things that need to be talked about. You know what they are.”

Agent: Melanie Jackson, Melanie Jackson Agency. (Sept.)

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ The Aftermath

Rhidian Brook. Knopf, \$25.95 (288p) ISBN 978-0-307-95826-6

Postwar Hamburg is the backdrop for British writer Brook's (*The Testimony of Taliesin Jones*) emotionally charged third novel, which is inspired by his family history. British Col. Lewis Morgan is stationed in the German city in 1946. He requisitions a house for his family, but instead of casting out its German owners (the standard procedure), he allows them to remain. Brook's chilling observations of Hamburg's defeated inhabitants and

“the fantastic destruction that lay all around” are unnerving and riveting. “Feral” children, he writes, beg for cigarettes and chocolates, and “Rubble Runners” clean up the remains of bombed-out buildings in exchange for food vouchers. But the novel's smaller stage—the home that Morgan; his wife, Rachael; and their son, Edmund, share with Stefan Lubert and his daughter, Freda—tells the bigger story. The blended families are uncomfortable with their new relationship, and the toxic effects of unassuaged grief for lost love ones complicates the situation. Fans of WWII-era historical fiction will be drawn to this novel. *First printing of 75,000. Agent: Stephanie Cabot, Gernert Company. (Sept. 17)*

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ Who Asked You?

Terry McMillan. Viking, \$27.95 (400p) ISBN 978-0-670-78569-8

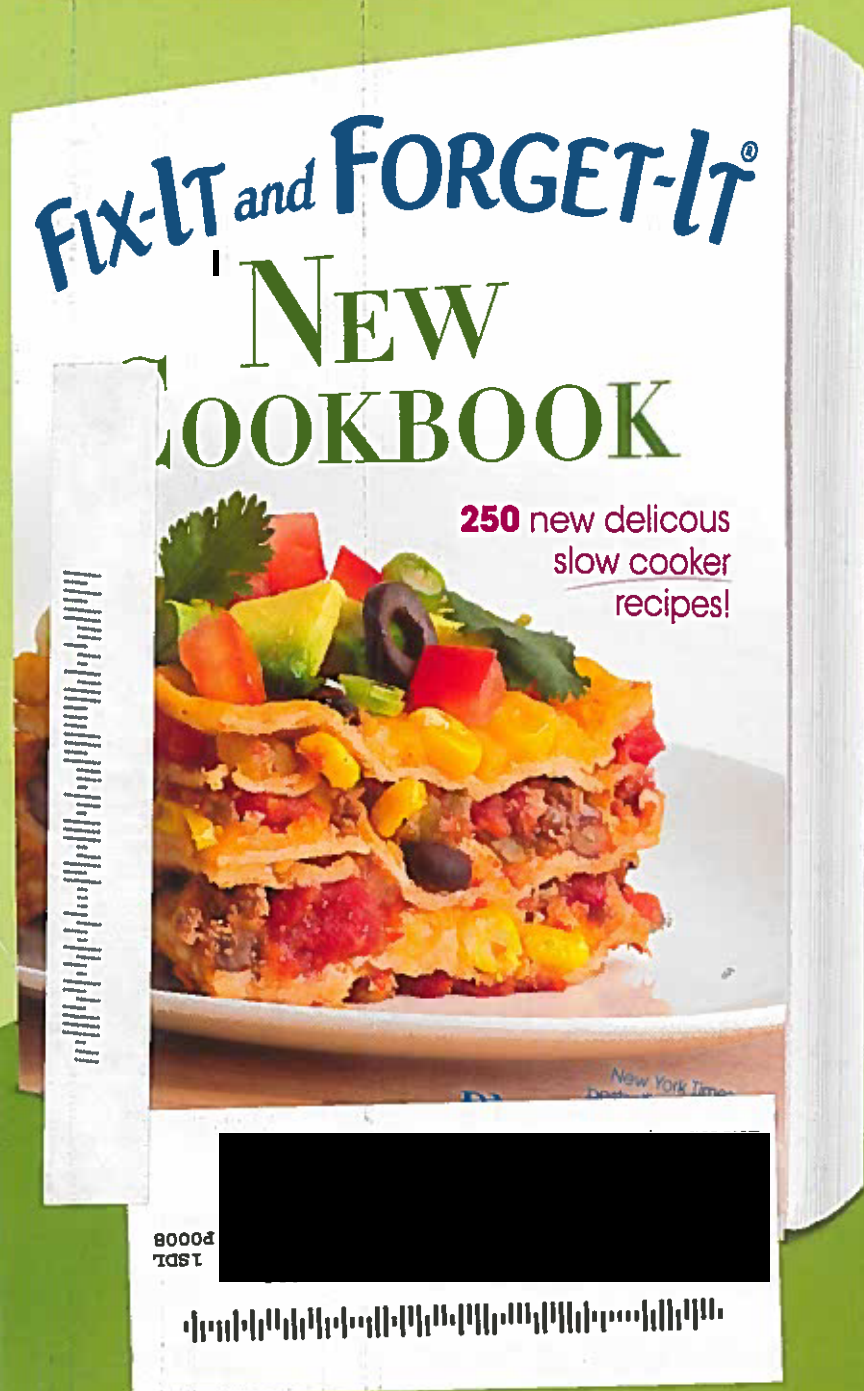
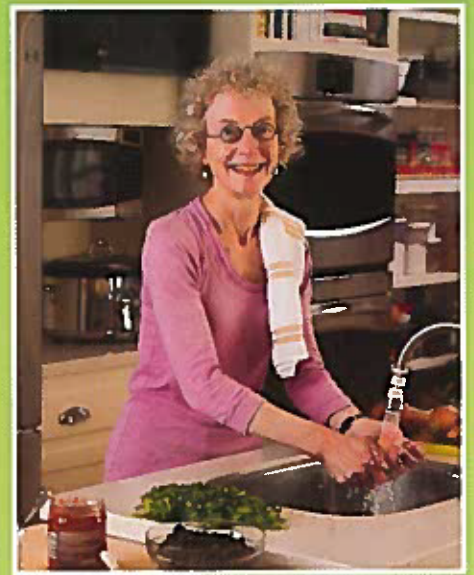
Three generations take a long hard look at each other—and, finding lots not to like, try to outrun, ignore, or beat the de-

★ Everything Flows

James Greer. Curbside Splendor, \$15.95 (125p) ISBN 978-0-9834228-8-4

To brand James Greer's slim new collection, *Everything Flows*, “experimental fiction” would be to sell it painfully short. Experimental fiction has its own rules and acceptable parameters, and Greer, a former bassist for the band Guided by Voices, exceeds even these over the course of these 19 urgent dispatches from the far side of reason, where anything can occur. A story might begin by considering a piece of renaissance sculpture, recall the flatulence of an ascetic monk, or present a day in the life of the obscure composer Tobias Hume (or is he the philosopher of the same surname?). From there, it might turn the tables on the reader (“Instead of listening to my story I think we could be more productive if you were to tell me yours”), interrogate its own substance, or transition into another story entirely. Plot hardly applies. “Everything Flows” concerns a man whose record of possession may be a matter of life and death. “Invisible Ink” digresses into a short biography of Northrop Frye (“Nothing he did made any difference”) and “Elephants” is, approximately, about elephants. And yet every word matters, even the wildest stories scarcely seeming as though they could be otherwise. Usually this sort of free-associative reverie is called “strange” or “playful,” but Greer's lyrical erudition is both serious work and seriously fun. Halfway between the mind of God and a vivid dream, *Everything Flows* is proof that there remain new places to go, both on paper and in the known universe. *(Sept. 10)*





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