

BOOK THOUGHTS

BATCH 8
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BY LINDSAY WINCHERAUK
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BLUE = MEMOIR OR BIOGRAPHICAL

BLACK = FICTION

DARK RED = EDUCATIONAL

PURPLE = ESSAY OR STORIES

ORANGE = POETRY

THE WHITE BOOK

HAN KANG



There is beauty in the pain of living.

How did the book make me feel/think?

Could this book really be about everything white?

I crack it open; I struggle to comprehend the words.

The imagery overwhelms me.

Every word has meaning, scratching my soul, opening my heart.

I open my mind.

A haunting event arises from the soul. A birth. Eyes barely open.

Breathing stops. What does it mean? I feel pain + suffering in words; the words swallow me – break me. There is minimalism

in pain. Beauty grows out of pain; living lathers more questions upon life? Is this a poem, a memoir, both? I turn another page – every word fills life to the brim with meaning. Every word moves pain toward what's next. I understand the profound beauty of discovering.

I'm damaged; I've always been.

I turn a page.

I'm stricken with grief.

A single tear rolls over my cheek, breaks at my chin and floats toward tomorrow.

Throw my emotions into a blender. Crank it to puree. What comes out is the beauty of making sense of every word delivered in living.

The **White Book** may be the most breathtakingly, heart-wrenchingly transformative book I've read.

SOMEONE WHO WILL LOVE YOU IN ALL YOUR DAMAGED GLORY

RAPHAEL BOB-WAKSBERG



A tasty, profound look at nothing, dropping from a scattering mind.

How did the book make me feel/think?

What I think happened here is Raphael Bob-Waksberg scooped a heaping helpful of his brain matter out with a mashed potato scoop. He tossed it into a blender filled with a deliciously nutritious mixture of fruits and supplements. He then threw in ice cream and ice—blended—and out poured a confusingly delectable mess.

Take a sip. OMG, brain freeze.

It's painful.

It's confusing.

I couldn't stop laughing.

Another page and more freeze.

WTF am I reading?

Is it nothing?

Is it something profound?

I take another blast. I think what I'm reading might be so incredibly deep it fills the shallow recesses of my mind to the brim with either clarity or, in the opposite, confusion.

I loved this book. I think Raphael may be a tad off. But what good is on if you can't open your mind to the brilliance found in insanity?

I do not know what any of my above thoughts on this book mean.

I am not even sure they are coherent.

Oh well, I loved this book.

BECOMING

MICHELLE OBAMA



A wonderful look inside the inner workings of how to be!

How did the book make me feel/think?

First off, I thoroughly enjoyed my trip through Michelle's life filled with challenges, desire, and hope. I found the story an uplifting look at normalcy and possibilities. I thank her for compellingly opening the door into her inner sanctum. Allowing readers to open their senses and almost touch, feel, and taste every aspect of living with the piercing public eye blasting on your every breath. The book truly is a look into the history of firsts.

That's where I'll stop with the platitudes. While scouring the pages, I couldn't help but think of where America is today? Which led to the following thoughts: With Barack Obama's grace, intelligence, honesty and caring, the world moved several steps forward. It felt as if hurdles over in joyful bounds.

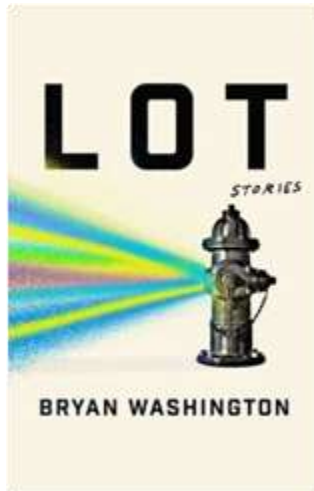
I know some have put on blinders. Or have allowed their inner evils to take the form of a delusional wish for something that never existed, have thrust hope and humanity ten steps backward.

I'm Canadian. I'm only stating that because I have no say in the politics of any other country. Reading *Becoming* made me long for a day where our leaders returned to wanting the best for everyone, not just themselves. I long for the circus to end and the world to heal. *Becoming* restored my belief in the likelihood of a better way happening once we remove toxicity from ruling our souls.

Thank you, Michelle, for becoming the fantastic beacon of hope you are!

LOT

BRYAN WASHINGTON



Mesmerized + Confused + LOST + Found + Warm.

How did the book make me feel/think?

Your cards have been dealt. You had no choice in the ones you received. You're Black, Latino, Blanco, Nicaraguan, Puerto Rican – of immigrant stock. Warehoused in the oppressive heat and humidity of Texas. Your family is diverse, a melting pot fuelled by the conditioning of a life filled with struggle.

You. Fight.

You. Survive.

You move on, but it trapped you inside, coming of age.

Your father is Latino.

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Your Mother is Black.

Your brother hates his existence.

Your sister is gone.

You discover you're gay.

LOT is an engrossing story of love and hate and survival and hope. It's a tender story about finding oneself, remaining whole, understanding obstacles, and blasting a harsh light on the realities of life for so many who were not cast in the pale of whiteness.

We're all damaged.

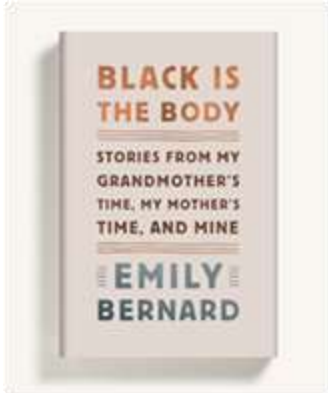
LOT tears the cover off, and the pains of belonging in unflinching clarity unravel a universal truth: "You bring yourself wherever you go. You are the one thing you can never run out on."

Thank you, Mr. Washington, for leading us closer to "of age."

I glance to my left. An animal is staring at me, steely-eyed, frothing – a Chupacabra! My heart skips a beat. The Chupacabra retreats into the bayou.

BLACK IS THE BODY

EMILY BERNARD



Every white person I know displays racist tendencies from time to time. This disturbs me. I'm white.

How did the book make me feel/think?

“Somewhere between the clarity of his focus and the complexity of my father’s anxiety, perhaps, lies the difference between living white and living black in America.”

Every white person I know displays racist tendencies from time to time. This disturbs me. I'm white.

It could be something as ridiculous as stating, “The only people who are affected by the Coronavirus are yellow.”

When a friend said this, I emphasized it was disgusting and offensive. He thought it was no big deal. It is a big deal.

I've encountered people I know commenting on how indigenous people or black people need to get over the atrocities they've faced because “I didn't do it to them. How long do they need to whine? I've worked hard for everything I have.”

You had an insurmountable head start. Bleep-hole.

OTHERS SCREAM

Others are racist toward us.

Bleeping, please, the worst thing I've ever been called is “Honky,” and I had to look up the meaning – and I still don't understand what the slur means. Racial slurs lose impact when you Google them before the offensiveness kicks in.

I once worked for a company based in Minnesota, and while chatting with a white co-worker about the South – his words were so vile; I won't type them here.

Movies + Television + Pop Culture + the Media have been conditioning us for a long time – this conditioning portrays all non-whites in dim light.

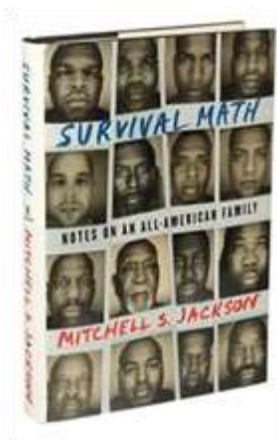
I called out someone on Facebook for extolling hateful rhetoric; he fired back; I must be ashamed of my skin.

I'm not too fond of the word 'woke. I equally detest 'us' whites overcompensating for our horrendous behaviour.

I encourage everyone to read **BLACK IS THE BODY**, especially 'us' whites. It may not change who you are, but it just might help you understand yours are not the only experiences that matter.

SURVIVAL MATH

MITCHELL S. JACKSON



Raw, Visceral, Heart-wrenching, and Cringe-inducing ...

How did the book make me feel/think?

Grateful + Enlightened

Black Americans could not legally give blood until 1941 – and when they were, ginormous plasma corporations were happy to drain it for a pittance.

Survival Math is a riveting look into the bloodline of Mitchell S. Jackson’s family. It is not a story of woe. It is a story of what was – and for far too many, still is. It’s raw, visceral, heart-wrenching, and cringe-inducing.

I have been conditioned my entire life to think in specific ways. I resist the conditioning. Interesting reads like this help me eradicate narrow beliefs and help me realize they have littered my path with opportunity instead of oppression. I can give blood.

1990 San Francisco

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Kev, Pat, and I were visiting. At noon, we arrived at Candlestick Park.

I drove a convertible.

We went through a predominantly black neighbourhood.

The sun was beating down.

Churchgoers were emptying a church – donning their Sunday best.

Kev panicked, “Go, go, go, go, floor it.”

Pat asked, “What’s wrong?”

“Two guys. On the porch – They are staring – go. Floor it. OMG. There is a van behind us. GO!”

We arrived at a freeway; I was about to run a red light.

“Whew, we are okay. It’s a church van,” Kev calmed.

We’ve all heard tales of neighbourhoods the police “won’t” even go into.

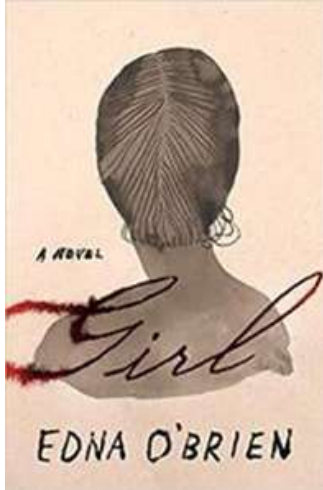
I can’t imagine what it’s like to go into predominately white neighbourhoods teeming with Starbucks and fear the police. It’s not part of my conditioning.

Our conditioning is based on oppression – keeping people down – on manipulating the easily manipulated (whites). And oppression conditioned those who weren’t allowed to give blood – by starving opportunities – into doing whatever was necessary to survive, even if survival resulted in a continuation of the oppression.

Thank you, Mitchell, for helping me grow.

GIRL

EDNA O'BRIEN



A breathtaking work of fiction that will open your eyes.

How did the book make me feel/think?

Upset. **GIRL** is (expletive) disgusting, yet, somehow, profoundly beautiful. I read a page. I cringed. I quivered. I know it's a work of fiction. But it's not. The world portrayed within its pages exists. I don't want it to. I want to be sheltered. How can a portion of humanity be so indoctrinated into seething revulsion? How can men be so delusional and propagandized to take part in subhuman behaviour and treatment of women to where they are scraping the depths of hell?

They gang rape.

They stone to death for infidelity.

They defile.

They are diseased.

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"They were dressed variously, some in jeans, and T-shirts, others in baggy attire and still others with army jackets. As they ran past us, a few took us in, appraising our juiciness."

This can't be real. Unfortunately, I think it is – I know it is. I'm troubled, angered. I want to eradicate these savages from existence. They are too damaged for there to be redemption. Their sickness is swarming the roots of their essence. How could any of them, who have been exposed, be cured?

I want to rescue those who've been trapped and thrust into this reality. It's fiction. But it's not. How can the women who've been subjected to this unrelenting torture not be as diseased as the men?

Their normal is lathered in toxicity.

Is there hope?

"I start to scrape at the clay-like an animal scraping to get out. I will never get out. I am here forever. I am asking God to please give me no more dreams. Make me blank. Empty me of all that was."

I can't stop reading. The prose is riveting.

I want to turn the page and find misery replaced with love.

I can't stop reading.

I wanted the ending to be anything but the only thing it could be.

GIRL, as unsettling as it is, is a breathtaking work of fiction that will open your eyes to the reason we all need to be grateful for the riches given to many of us. It's a stunning look into a horrific world existing for far too many. But as much as I was welling with rage and wanted to condemn and judge—I instinctively knew if we take that path, we risk being inflicted with a similar disease, curse—I want there to be a cure. I don't want anyone to endure the indoctrination, the sickness, the shunning, the vile hatred.

GIRL is must-read.

IF YOU DID WHAT I ASKED IN THE FIRST PLACE

LORI B. DUFF



Refreshing + Whimsical + Gelastic + Real!

How did the book make me feel/think?

Hello, I'm Jenny Lawson.

Pleased to meet you, Jenny. I'm Amy Schumer.

Hey, Jenny + Amy, I'm Melissa McCarthy. Do you want to go grab a drink and jam about life?

Wait for me, I'm B. J. Novak. Hey, what am I doing here?

Jenny + Amy + Melissa, + B.J. walks into a bar. They slam back several martinis and shots + rap about the absurdity that is life. It's time to go. Out walks Lori B. Duff. She's fresh. Tipsy. Slightly less dysfunctional than the four dazzlingly eclectic comedic minds that walked in (minds are incapable of walking). She belongs.

"If You Did What I Asked in the First Place" will have your insides in stitches as Lori B. Duff takes you on a highly intoxicating, hilarious journey through the madness of what being a reformed lawyer might entail.

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Refreshing + Whimsical + Gelastic + Real!

"If You Did..." is chock-full of pop culture references. If you are not paying attention, they might skirt past you—pay attention—if you do, you will be rewarded with a wispy bombardment of comedic twists and turns that will leave you wanting more.

I pause and plop myself down by the Christmas tree and tear the wrapping off one of my presents—wow—a Red Ryder BB gun!

Who doesn't hate small talk?

I agree with Lori's father, "When you are born, you are only allowed so many words—" — so I'll stop typing soon. I used—so—twice in the same sentence, shameful.

Lori forgot her handbag and stumbled back into the bar. Jenny + Amy + Melissa + B.J. all rise, greeting her with a round of applause, and they dive back into rapping without missing a beat!

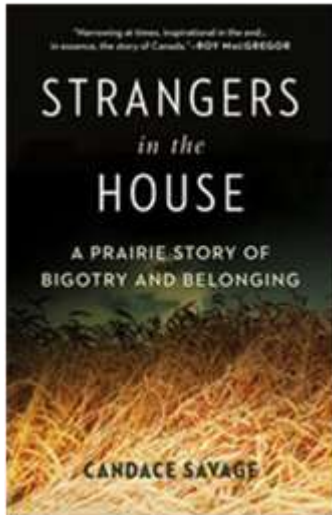
Flip the page, and I guarantee you'll relate, and without question: cackling, with what you are about to ingest!

When some people go to the store, they just go to the store. When Lori goes to the store, Lori goes with eyes wide open; she may trip and leave herself with an unsightly gash; she takes in the living's silliness and thankfully shares what she sees. With us!

I read a whack of books, "If You Did..." is definitely one of the most enjoyable books I've read!

STRANGERS IN THE HOUSE

CANDACE SAVAGE



A gripping story diving deep into the ills of societies...past (?)

How did the book make me feel/think?

QUEASY + ENLIGHTENED + GROTESQUELY APPALLED

I grew up in Saskatoon | spending my first 30 years there | I loved it, but I never thought much of its insularity until I moved away. Underneath its delightful façade sits darkness swept underneath thick shag carpeting.

STRANGERS IN THE HOUSE reads like a revealing DNA test on steroids where genetics are replaced by stripping the drywall and discovering the secrets within the bones of a house. The book is an interesting look at where we are as a society stacked up against where we've been. Disturbingly, the

distance between 'where' | and | 'are' razor-thin and dented with fragility.

Saskatoon is a wondrous place. Full of darkness. Full of light. It is a beacon. While reading *Strangers*, I became upset. It clouded my hometown with shame.

STRANGERS IN THE HOUSE exposes the grotesque disease that has inflicted many people with a sense of superiority. It sheds light on the reality that although humanity has come a long way in eradicating hatred and the sickness of xenophobia – the slope is slippery, and if we don't continue paying attention – society could quickly slip back into –

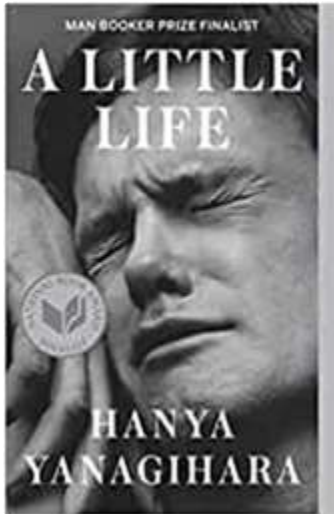
"With their strange dialects, their superstitions and gross ignorance and filth, we are supposed to build up the homogeneous {race} of intelligent, industrious, honest, clean, civilized people." Hiving the riffraff off in separate schools would just make the problem worse. The only solution was to ensure that every young person in the country passed through the refinement fix of a centrally controlled "national" school to emerge as a worthy citizen of the British Empire.

The preceding excerpt made me feel ill. The sickness is real. Assimilation = Invisibility.

STRANGERS IN THE HOUSE is a gripping story diving deep into society's ills. While ensuring we pay attention to all the phenomenal gains humanity has made, we don't shift with the foundation, causing us to taint the good that comes from uncovering the past.

A LITTLE LIFE

HANYA YANAGIHARA



This is the first book I've read I loved and hated in the same sentence.

How did the book make me feel/think?

Destroyed – Disturbed - Upset - Angry

“A Little Life” is a beautiful, disturbing, awful book about the mess of living.

Four college roommates traipse through life, achieving a modicum of success. Each one needs something to hold on to in their efforts to chase completeness. Like me, like you, they are damaged, broken, flawed. They are needy, smothering one another with a craving to belong. Their families + pasts peck at their cores, restricting them from ever being genuinely vulnerable. They love each other unconditionally (?) an

overused term – “A Little Life” blasts a powerful light on the absurdity of the word.

11 The main character, Jude, is flawed, to the core, by his impossible past + the equally impossible realities of his present.

“(Friendship...) It was feeling honoured by the privilege of getting to be present for another person’s most dismal moments and knowing that you could be dismal around him in return.”

Jude is the glue among his friends; his suffering is their place of comfort. His experiences are exceedingly horrendous, draped in secrecy – and unendurable to move past.

They can trap us all in an earth-shattering moment in life – an event never to be erased. No amount of unconditional love + friendship can ever heal the individual experience because every experience is the sole property of the person who’s had to endure it. Nobody can understand the full scope of someone else’s pain. The best we can do is listen, because in the silence of distress – they shout all we need to know out: loud and clear.

This is the first book I’ve read I loved and hated in the same sentence. I’ve read many people cried while reading it. I didn’t. I’ve read it destroyed some readers emotionally. It destroyed me as well. I wouldn’t say I liked the characters. They were too real, too damaged, too helpless. What destroyed me: I identified with Jude → in an emotionally charged way → by being trapped inside our most traumatic moments.

After I read the last word, a strange thing occurred: the book grew another 800 pages.