

In Praise of Difficult Women: Life Lessons from 29 Heroines Who Dared to Break the Rules.

By Karen Karbo.

Feb. 2018. 352p. National Geographic, \$26 (9781426217746). 305.42.

Karbo, author of *The Gospel According to Coco Chanel* (2009), compiles this epic collection of mini biographies. The selection of subjects ranges from painters to politicians; from Josephine Baker to Margaret Cho to Amelia Earhart to Laverne Cox. All 29 women profiled fit Karbo's definition of a "difficult woman": unapologetic, uncompromising, and undeterred by the obstacles of living in a sexist society. Each of the essays highlights the trickiest moments of its subject's life and how she blasted through whatever glass ceiling was in her way—all told with Karbo's conversational warmth and sharp wit. Countless memorable stories about familiar figures can be found within: the time Frida Kahlo was commissioned to paint a portrait in memory of a friend and in turn presented a gruesome image of the friend's suicide; how Angela Merkel celebrated the fall of the Berlin Wall by not missing her weekly scheduled sauna; and endless Carrie Fisher comebacks. Overall, the book is a wonderfully readable introduction to today's and history's heroines who refused to follow the rules. —*Courtney Eathorne*

YA: Teen readers will love learning more about favorite twenty-first-century feminists and meeting the power women of times gone by. CE.

It's Even Worse Than You Think: What the Trump Administration Is Doing to America.

By David Cay Johnston.

Jan. 2018. 320p. Simon & Schuster, \$28 (9781501174162). 320.

Johnston, news commentator and author of the best-selling *The Making of Donald Trump* (2016), has been reporting on Donald J. Trump for decades. Here he brings his Pulitzer Prize-winning journalistic skills and deep concern about the state of our union to a momentously thorough account of President Trump's alarmingly chaotic first year in office, focusing on largely unreported stories about what's afoot far from the blare of Trump's tweets and perpetual circus of denials, lies, and diversions. Johnston's well-sourced and knowledgeable account chronicles exactly how cabinet secretaries and their staffs are dismantling protection of everything from worker safety to fair banking policies, veteran's benefits, and affordable education, while purging diplomats and scientists, especially those studying climate change. (He describes Trump's appointees as "political termites" undermining our government, often for personal gain.) Johnston also cites numerous manifestations of Trump's dangerous narcissism, dishonesty, greed, ignorance of facts, "contempt for the rule of law," and dictatorial ambitions. This precise and fiery indictment of an unstable, unethical president concludes

with a call for us to defend our democracy, a system of "compromise, cooperation, and caring." —*Donna Seaman*

The Land between Two Rivers: Writing in an Age of Refugees.

By Tom Sleigh.

Feb. 2018. 272p. Graywolf, paper, \$16 (9781555977962). 305.9.

Poet-journalist Sleigh spent decades of his life traveling around Africa and the Middle East in an effort to understand the specifics of sociopolitical unrest in these places. The war, famine, jihad, and military rule that he witnessed only left him with more questions, hungry to bear witness to more of the unfamiliar world. In this collection of essays, Sleigh does a few different things: first, he chronicles his time teaching writing classes in Baghdad, and reporting for the U.S. State Department from Jordan. In the book's mid-section, he analyzes the work of several poets (Anna Akhmatova, Ashur Etwebi, Tomas Tranströmer, to name a few) and contextualizes their poetry within the political climate of their homeland. In the endearing final section, Sleigh writes of his childhood, growing up in Texas, Utah, and California during Jim Crow. The fragmented thirds of this book have little unity until the final few pages, when Sleigh concedes his aversion to writing a collection of essays with a singular theme. —*Courtney Eathorne*

Leftover in China: The Women Shaping the World's Next Superpower.

By Roseann Lake.

Feb. 2018. 288p. Norton, \$26.95 (9780393254631). 305.4.

Fun fact: Chinese women now account for more than two-thirds of the 124 self-made female billionaires on the planet, with one, Yang Huiyan, the youngest and the richest in Asia. Yet for all that, Huiyan and others like her are pejoratively known as "leftovers," women who either choose not to marry or who have been shunted to the slow lanes of the marriage race due to their urban, professional lifestyles. Thanks to China's controversial one-child policy, new generations of women reaped the largesse once bestowed on preferred male children, resulting in better-educated, upwardly mobile women who enjoy their newfound status, even as they struggle to appease their parents' wishes for them to fulfill more traditional roles. Based on a five-year stint as a television reporter in China, journalist and producer Lake presents an intimate yet wide-ranging examination of this economic and cultural phenomenon, a book that sparkles with personal revelations as well as important social and cultural details. —*Carol Haggas*

The Source: How Rivers Made America and America Remade Its Rivers.

By Martin Doyle.

Feb. 2018. 352p. illus. Norton, \$26.95 (9780393242355). 386.

The lyrics of "America the Beautiful" emi-

nently praise the country's purple mountains and waves of grain but say nothing of its more than three million miles of flowing rivers. Yet as Duke University environmental science professor Doyle observes in this informative look at the history and management of the nation's waterways, rivers like the Hudson, Mississippi, and Potomac have played indispensable roles not only in creating state boundaries and port cities but also in establishing a thriving federal economy. Covering a broad sweep of American history, Doyle peers back at seminal river-related milestones, such as the Gold Rush launch in 1848 and Hoover Dam's construction during the Depression. The author also sorts through the tangle of regulations and resource management policies that have affected how river water is channeled to businesses and consumers, leading at times to some bitter fights over who controls which parts of which rivers, since, unlike drawing land borders, "dividing water is not intuitive." Readers interested in everything from American history to business, engineering, environmental concerns, and canoeing will find Doyle's work absorbing and educational. —*Carl Hays*

This Green and Growing Land: Environmental Activism in American History.

By Kevin C. Armitage.

Jan. 2018. 268p. Rowman & Littlefield, \$37 (9781442237070); e-book, \$35. 363.7.

Armitage (*The Nature Study Movement*, 2009) highlights the individuals and organizations whose efforts contributed to America's conservation of its natural assets. From grassroots action to government policies, he traces the changing relationship we've had with our land, air, and water since Ben Franklin fought industrial waste in Philadelphia, through our expansion to the Pacific coast, and into the modern era. Our use and abuse of resources reflect ideological shifts, and Armitage puts these into social and political context, from the Industrial Revolution through the recognition of nature's limits and the spurring of scientific research into the effects our species is having on the planet. The modern environmental movement, modeled on anti-Vietnam War protests, achieved major victories in the 1970s, resulting in huge reductions in industrial pollution. Although Armitage sidesteps much of today's charged political debate, he emphasizes the fact that the fight to defend the environment continues. The title, from a song by Phil Ochs, a folk singer associated with 1960s activism, reminds us of the grace and beauty of our land and our duty to protect it. —*Dan Kaplan*

The Wall and the Gate: Israel, Palestine, and the Legal Battle for Human Rights.

By Michael Sfar. Tr. by Maya Johnston.

Jan. 2018. 528p. Holt/Metropolitan, \$35 (9781250122704). 342.569408.

A fence separates two men from their olive groves. They wish for a gate to be installed, but the lawyer they've hired knows this

would only legitimize the fence. He wants to eliminate this barrier entirely in a fight that would mean sacrificing years of harvest to legal proceedings. Lawyer Sfar explores the tension involved in fighting for people and human rights in this forceful polemic against Israel's occupation of the West Bank and dense chronicle of the injustices done against Arabs by Israel. Himself a Jew, Sfar, on behalf of clients who do not hold full rights of citizenship, attacks what he calls the Israeli government's "full suit of legal armor." He also argues for a more idealistic notion of our common humanity. And, like the most expert of litigators, Sfar pairs political history and legal philosophy with anecdotal accounts, crafting a complex portrait of how occupation and oppression chip away at the character of Israel's society. —*Maggie Taft*

Business

Nimble: Make Yourself and Company Nimble in the Age of Constant Change.

By Baba Prasad.

Feb. 2018. 272p. Tarcher, \$26 (9780143131458). 650.

The "something new" in business these days almost invariably centers on one word; management consultant Prasad's is *agility*. He takes his swing at the definition and its applications and identifies five types: analyt-

ical, operational, inventive, communicative and visionary. All are fairly easily described for instance, analytical agility focuses on awareness of all options to solve a problem. Prasad gives good and not-so-good examples for each, accompanied by the downsides of too much dependence on that particular attribute. Retailer Zara, for one, is a superb representative of operational agility, as Prasad cites the chairman's statement, "In fashion stock is like food. It goes bad quick." But companies that overcommit to operational excellence exhibit micromanagement, action for action's sake, and intimidation. All five types of agility, Prasad insists, must be present for a business to succeed. At the end, he tacks on the simple framework MAST (mapping, assessing, strategizing, testing) to guide executives in the use of the agility gene. —*Barbara Jacobs*

Reset: Business and Society in the New Social Landscape.

By James Rubin and Barie Carmichael.

Jan. 2018. 216p. Columbia Univ., \$29.95 (9780231178242); e-book, \$28.99 (9780231545907). 650.

Doing good is good for business, and Rubin and Carmichael of the University of Virginia's Darden School of Business present compelling evidence to that effect. As social media makes corporate activity widely visible, public expectations of businesses are high. With

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