

WOMONSCAPE TIMES

~A monthly publication by the Womonscape Center Inc.~



W O M O N S C A P E C E N T E R

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What is your Go-To Book? What is a book that has deeply affected you, that you find yourself returning to, time and again, over the years? One of the women at our latest *No-Rules Book Group* asked us this question. Below* are some of the responses. Some are controversial when viewed from a modern perspective, but all have powerful roots. What is your “go to” book? Feel free to send us your favorite title(s) by letter or email to womonscapecenter@fastmail.net, or our address listed on page 10.

***The Good Earth**, by Pearl S. Buck, **Wave**, by Sonali Deraniyagala, **Jane Eyre**, by Charlotte Bronte, **The Bean Trees**, by Barbara Kingsolver, **Gone With the Wind**, by Margaret Mitchell, **Lonesome Dove**, by Larry McMurtry, **Uncle Tom’s Cabin**, by Harriet Beecher Stowe, **Cold Mountain**, by Charles Frazier, **The Well of Loneliness**, by Radclyffe Hall, **American Dirt**, by Jeanine Cummins, and, **Fried Green Tomatoes**, by Fannie Flagg.

**Come join us at the *No-Rules Book Group* at 10:30am on March 20, Thursday, at the Richland Center Courthouse, Conference Room #1, lobby level.

ESCAPE ARTIST by Helen Fremont Non-Fiction

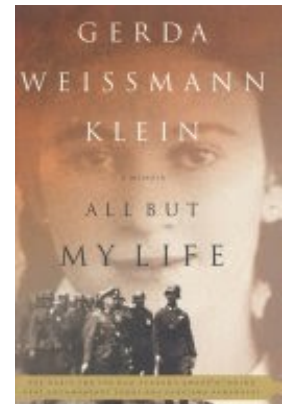
In this memoir, the acclaimed author takes a close look at her early years, and the elaborate series of lies and painful events that shaped her life as the daughter of Holocaust survivors. In an effort to put their tragic past behind them and make a fresh start in 1950s America, Fremont’s parents lied about their European roots. But the emotional toll it took to keep up appearances gradually destroyed the health and well-being of the very people they sought to protect. Fremont became the “escape artist” of the family for her own survival.



Here are some books/films discussed last month.

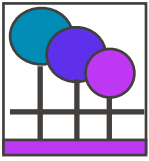
ALL BUT MY LIFE: A MEMOIR by Gerda Weissmann Klein Non-Fiction

All But My Life is the 1959 autobiographical account of Klein’s six-year internment during the Holocaust. While the events chronicled happened decades ago, the message still rings true today. Klein and her friends in the labor camps built their own community. Although they lost their possessions, their identities, and their family members, they found ways to share kindness and retain their sanity and humanity. Her story was adapted into an *Emmy* and *Academy Award*-winning short documentary in 1995, entitled *One Survivor Remembers*. (See page 4.)



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NO-RULES BOOK GROUP (NRBG)

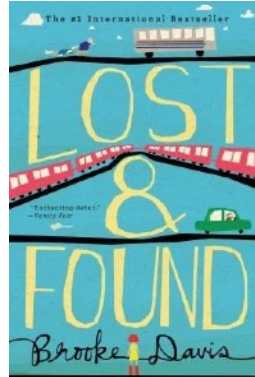
(Continued from page 1)



LOST AND FOUND

by Brooke Davis
Fiction

Lost and Found is told from the point of view of three people, all of whom have lost someone important in their lives. Millie, age seven, has lost her family. Her mother left her behind in the clothing section of a department store, and never returned. Karl, an 80-something retired touch-typist, has been at a loss as to how to go on with his life since his wife died. He spends his days wandering around the same department store where Millie continues to wait for her mother. Agatha, also 80-something, hasn't left her house since she was widowed; she spends her days looking out the window and yelling about life. Thrown together by an odd set of circumstances, they set out to find Millie's mother. Davis's simple, direct storytelling addresses how to find meaning in life when you are overlooked by society and overwhelmed by grief. This book will make its readers laugh, cry, and think.

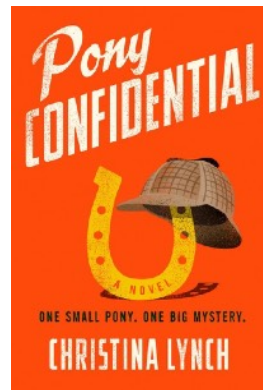


PONY CONFIDENTIAL

by Christina Lynch
Fiction

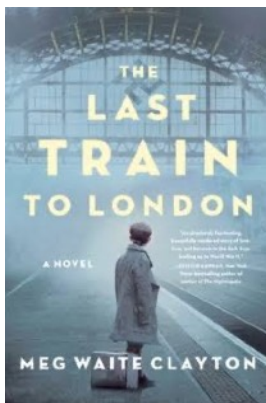
As a general rule, our reviewer does not enjoy novels or stories that feature talking animals. This book was a pleasant exception. The two main characters of *Pony Confidential*, a pony and the girl who once owned him, alternate narrating the story in short chapters. The girl's parents sold the pony when she was quite young; yet, twenty years later, she still misses him deeply. We soon learn the the pony mourns their relationship as well; he believes the girl didn't care about him anymore. Both characters

look for each other through the years, traveling many miles and using a variety of transportation modes, and continue to reflect on the relationships between humans and animals. Truth be told, the most profound and poignant parts of this book were found in the Pony's chapters. This is Ms. Lynch's debut novel.



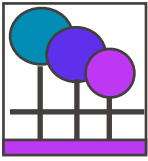
THE LAST TRAIN TO LONDON

by Meg Waite Clayton
Fiction



This historical novel is based on the people involved in the *Kindertransports*, a series of special trains that carried thousands of children out of Nazi-occupied Europe. The story follows the lives of two fictional Austrian teenagers: Stephan Neuman, the son of a wealthy Jewish family and Zofie-Helene, a Christian girl whose mother edits an anti-Nazi newspaper. The teens are saved by the real-life Truus Wijsmuller, a member of the Dutch resistance, who risked her life to smuggle children away from the Nazi-controlled areas of Europe to nations that would accept and care for them. Wijsmuller was responsible for the safe transport of as many as 10,000 children to the United Kingdom between 1938 and 1940. Clayton is *The New York Times* best-selling author of *Beautiful Exiles*.

(Continued on page 3)



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NO-RULES BOOK GROUP (NRBG)

(Continued from page 2)



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY — MARCH 8

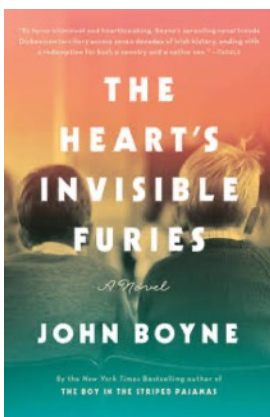


THE BLUESTOCKINGS: A HISTORY OF THE FIRST WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

by Susannah Gibson

Non-Fiction

The *Bluestockings* were a group of upper class British women who dared to create intellectual lives for themselves and their friends in the mid-to late-18th century. At the time, upper class women had very few life options. They were expected to be beautiful enough to catch a husband, healthy enough to bear multiple children, and smart enough to manage a household of servants and gardeners. However, they were also expected *not* to work outside of the home, own property, manage their own finances, go to college, do their own housework, mingle socially with people outside of their own class, or be interested in any kind of intellectual reading, writing, or discussions. The *Bluestockings* got around these rules of living by forming salon-like writing and discussion groups where they shared ideas and encouraged each other's intellectual independence even as they continued to play their expected roles in most of the rest of their lives. Based on detailed, scholarly research, Gibson's book celebrates the lives and accomplishments of these women and notes the considerable influence they had on later generations of feminists. While often limited or even snobby in their points of view, various members of the *Bluestockings* nevertheless managed to publish poetry and novels, create a women-run utopian commune, survive tragic early deaths of many of their children, and choose non-traditional marriage agreements with their husbands.



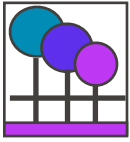
THE HEART'S INVISIBLE FURIES

by John Boyne

Fiction

Boyne's novel was a reader's favorite for historical fiction when it was published in 2017. It follows the life of a character named Cyril Avery, who was adopted in the 1940s by a wealthy Dublin couple. Cyril spends decades of his life trying to come to terms with the social factors that led to his adoption, and his identity as a young man questioning his sexuality while living in a very Catholic country. Although the subject matter is often serious, the book is written with a combination of humor and pathos. Boyne is an accomplished Irish writer who is probably best known for his novel The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas.

(Continued on page 4)



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NO-RULES BOOK GROUP

(Continued from page 3)



FILM REVIEWS

The movie award season is in full swing at this time of year. As of this writing, the *Golden Globes* and the *Screen Actors Guild Awards* have already been presented, and the *Academy Awards* are right around the corner. Some of the *Womonscape* film buffs are doing their best to see all or nearly all of the nominated films in any and all categories. It's quite a challenge! Below* are some of the films mentioned at our latest *No-Rules Book Group*. We reviewed *Emilia Perez* in the January edition, and *The Remarkable Life of Ibelin*, in the February edition of the *Womonscape Times*. This month we have included a review of *The Substance* (below). If you have seen any of the films listed (or others you would recommend), and would like to write a short review, please send it to the *Womonscape Times* at PO Box 335, Richland Center WI 53581, or by email at womonscapecenter@fastmail.net.

**Wicked, Enora, The Nickel Boys, The Apprentice, A Real Pain, Sing Sing, Conclave, Emilia Perez, and, Small Things Like These.*

THE SUBSTANCE



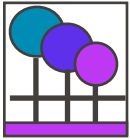
This unusual film definitely challenges the viewer. It is a horror film that includes a strong dose of social commentary. Demi Moore plays the role of Elizabeth, a woman who is to be replaced as the star of a popular television aerobics series because she is “too old.” In order to hold time at bay and keep her job, she signs up for a program that involves injecting herself with a *substance*. The *substance* causes Elizabeth’s body to divide in two—a new, younger body (Sue, played by Margaret Qualley) and her original body. Each body’s fate is linked to that of the other, and only one body can be alive at any given time, during alternating weeks. Regular injections of *the substance* keep the strange system going. Sue gets Elizabeth’s aerobics job, with all of its glamour and fame; Elizabeth gets to live a life of leisure. This all sounds like a pretty good deal until the two women become dissatisfied with their lives and start breaking the rules of the program. The result is, well, horrifically disastrous, and a strong message about beauty standards for American women. While the horror genre might be too much for some, Moore and

Qualley’s acting is magnificent and the film’s message is an important one.

ONE SURVIVOR REMEMBERS (Documentary, Non-fiction)

This is a short (40 minutes) documentary featuring Holocaust survivor Gerda Weissmann Klein (author of *All But My Life*; see book review on page 1). Director Kary Antholis uses a simple, direct, and powerful method to film Gerda and her husband, Kurt. The Kleins talk directly into the camera about her experiences in the camps and his observations as a U.S. soldier working with camp survivors. Parts of the documentary include graphic images, with photographs and film clips taken immediately after the liberation of camp prisoners. *One Survivor Remembers* won an Emmy Award and an Academy Award for short documentary in 1995.





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HAVE YOU HEARD OF THIS WOMAN?



DARCY PADILLA

The old adage, *a picture is worth a thousand words*, certainly applies to photographer Darcy Padilla.

Ms. Padilla is a narrative photographer, which means that she uses her photographs, often taken over months or even years, to tell a story about her subjects. Padilla's projects tend to focus on social issues such as urban poverty, drug addiction and HIV/AIDS.

Padilla was born in California in 1965. Her father was a Mexican immigrant who was employed as a social worker, and her mother was employed in a hospital. She got her first camera at the age of 12, and started taking photos for her own use and as part of the yearbook staff at her high school. She earned a journalism degree at *San Francisco State University* and an MFA in studio art at the *University of California* in Davis.

Padilla's impressive credentials include working for *The Washington Post* and the *The New York Times* earning a Guggenheim Fellowship, and teaching at colleges in California, New York and, at present, the *University of Wisconsin-Madison*. But she has not been afraid to take less glamorous jobs, at restaurants and department stores, to support herself so that she can create deeply meaningful photography projects.

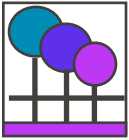
in 1990, at the age of 25, Padilla began a one-year project, *AIDS in Prison*, about prisoners in the AIDS ward of the state prison in Vacaville, California. In the early 1990s she continued following the AIDS epidemic by documenting social workers, nurses, and doctors working at the *Ambassador Hotel* in San Francisco, which at that time served as overflow housing for hospital patients. One of the patients she met at that time, Julie Baird, was a young woman of 19, who lived with her new baby at the hotel. Padilla continued to photograph Julie's life in *The Julie Project* and *Family Love*, from 1993 until 2010, through childrearing, HIV/AIDS, drug addiction, and death.

In 2006, Padilla used her considerable talents to photograph 50 successful African American and Latina women for a photo exhibit and book, *Voices: African-American and Latina Women in Pennsylvania Share Their Stories of Success*. In 2013 she joined nine other photojournalists to document poverty, housing, immigration, racism, war, economic disparity and natural disasters in the United States. And in 2017 she displayed a long-term project about the *Pine Ridge Indian Reservation* in South Dakota.



Darcy Padilla

(Continued on page 6)



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HAVE YOU HEARD OF THIS WOMAN?

DARCY PADILLA

(Continued from page 5)

Padilla’s strength as a photographer lies in her ability to acknowledge the humanity of even the most desolate of her subjects. She gets to know their lives and their struggles, and allows the viewer an insight into the complexity of their life decisions, their pain, and their joys.

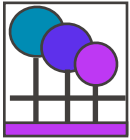
Padilla continues to tell stories about American people with her photographs, from research scientists to the unhoused, and to inspire her students, the next generation of photographers. She explains, “*I work the way I work because I’m trying to answer questions. I’m much more interested in the search for an answer to a question than saying, ‘This is it.’*”



Top two photos are from a post-2008 Great Recession project called *California Dreamin.’*

Left photo is from *The Julie Project*. (Pictured are Julie and one of her five children, along with the child’s father)

(Continued on page 7)



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HAVE YOU HEARD OF THIS WOMAN?

EMILY BAXTER

(Continued from page 6)

Emily Baxter is a lawyer with a mission. She wants to spread the message that *We Are All Criminals*.

What does she mean by that? And what exactly is her mission?

Well, it all started some years ago when Emily graduated from the *University of Minnesota* and the *University of St. Thomas School of Law*. She took her law degree to the *Council on Crime and Justice* in Minneapolis, where she worked as an assistant public defender for members of the Ojibwa Nation. She also took her degree to Durham, North Carolina where she worked with the *Coalition for Alternatives to the Death Penalty*.

Emily spent much of her time trying to find employers, landlords, and others who would offer a second chance to someone with a criminal record. Often she heard her requests dismissed with a simple, “You can’t trust a con,” or “Once a criminal, always a criminal.” She got used to hearing these phrases even as she kept trying to help her clients move forward with their lives.



But one day she met a man named Anthony and she changed her perspective. Here’s how Emily remembers the experience.

~ Anthony was tall, thin, black, and clearly distraught. He walked hesitantly toward me, and as he sat across the table he pulled from his back pocket a copy of his criminal record he had received from a computer terminal upstairs.

Given this man’s clear distress, I nervously opened it—and was thankful to see that it was a theft, and a minor one at that. I let out a short laugh of relief. Even if the judge didn’t expunge the matter, I said, it’s not like your life was over.

At that, Anthony began to cry. He told me that earlier that day, he had considered taking his own life. You see, while it was just a theft to me—to Anthony, it was a lost job, it was missed housing payments, it was skipped meals, it was door after door slammed in his face. It was the loss of respect from his friends and family, the loss of a sense of self, the loss of hope.....

I thought: How many times had I taken something that wasn’t mine? Sure, I’d considered my own criminality before—but not like this. I hadn’t really thought about what life would be like in the shadow of that record, the suffocating stigma of being caught. What would life be like if I didn’t have the luxury to forget?...

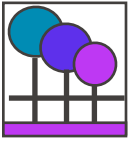
At every turn, I think of Anthony. We get together every now and then, he makes lunch while I look at photos of his family and take pictures of my own. The last time I saw him, he was dropping me off at a meeting with local policymakers. At a red light, he turned to me and said:

*“I just keep telling myself: one in four, one in four, one in four.
I’m not alone. I’m not broken.”*

*“Four in four, four in four, four in four. We may all be
criminals, but that’s not all we are.”*

I couldn’t have said it better, Anthony. Thank you. ~

(Continued on page 8)



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HAVE YOU HEARD OF THIS WOMAN?

EMILY BAXTER

(Continued from page 7)

Emily did her best to help Anthony, to take his situation seriously. But she also started asking people with criminal histories but no record, an estimated 75% of the population, about the crimes they had committed yet had had the luxury to forget. She added photographs and criminal justice statistics to the stories and turned everything into a TED talk, an organization, a website, and a traveling art exhibit. The goal of the organization, *We Are All Criminals*, is to use first-person narratives to demonstrate the destruction caused by decades of mass criminalization and to serve as a catalyst for conversations about race, class, privilege, punishment, and mercy.

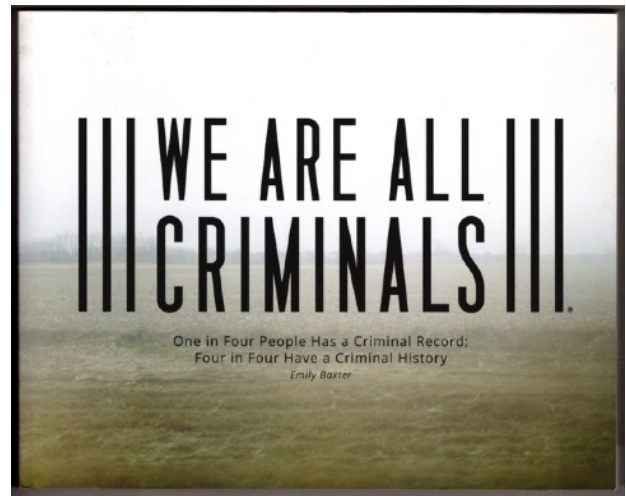
Facility Bred

*I've become
an empty shell case in an abandoned room.
Rigidly lonesome
far from lonely highways
I have travelled before. I recognize
this pattern.
This seduction—
I am my own heroin.
Lying bare
-stolen.*

*I yearn with anger.
I yearn to fight
to bleed, create new brave scars
standing in snow tracks in these concrete plains*

*I am desert sand, proud with no water.
A pipe carrier
with no elder—David has passed.
I am without.
Those thundering storms
Won. Alone
I stand
resting in steel chains,
losing the woman I want to be.*

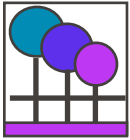
* This poem is written by Louise, a participant in the *We Are All Criminals* project, and published in *This is Where*, a collection of Louise's poetry.



When I write, I am with my home, with my family, with my Indigenous Peoples. I am not just an offender, I am a woman, a daughter, a mom, sister. It is through and with my writing that I get to be who I am, a multifaceted Anishinaabekwe with a voice and a story to share.

~ Louise





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OUR MARCH CRYPTOQUOTE

Each letter below stands for a completely different letter. Hints: Z = W V = N
The decoded quotation comes from one of the women mentioned in this newsletter.
The solution will be available in next month's *Womonscape Times*.

MCWFDHP CW G TGHA FGNBJ QEBB

DQ CBBEWDVW, GVA ZJ REWF

WDHF FMHDEUM GVA SCTX FMJ

DVJW ZJ ZCWM FD NJBCJLJ.

—MJB JV QHJR DVF

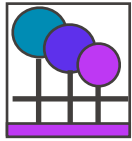
HERE'S THE ANSWER TO FEBRUARY'S CRYPTOQUOTE

There's a power in music that unites people. You can take a roomful of people and make them feel their kinship in a way that nothing else can with a song. — Barbara Dane

CAN YOU UNSCRAMBLE THESE LETTERS TO MAKE A WORD OR A NAME RELATED TO THIS NEWSLETTER?

- | | |
|------------------|---------------|
| 1. DRGAE | 2. OEMRTFN |
| 3. CRYDA | 4. IISNMTFE |
| 5. TXABRE | 6. COSPANMOWE |
| 7. NLTKSCBEUSOIG | 7. IOMMRE |

Answers in the April edition of the *Womonscape Times*.



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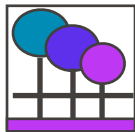
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APRIL 17 is our next
scheduled
No-Rules Book Group
in Richland Center.
See Page 1 for details.

**Womonscape
Times**

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• Ilse, a childhood friend of mine, once found a raspberry in the concentration camp and carried it in her pocket all day to present to me that night on a leaf. Imagine a world in which your entire possession is one raspberry and you give it to your friend.—~ Gerda Weissmann Klein

• Aging is not for the weak. One day you wake up and realize that your youth is gone, but along with it, so go insecurity, haste, and the need to please... You learn to walk more slowly, but with greater certainty. You say goodbye without fear, and you cherish those who stay. Aging means letting go, it means accepting, it means discovering that beauty was never in our skin... but in the story we carry inside us. —~ Meryl Streep

DONATIONS WELCOMED

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