

Self-Published Books Showcase

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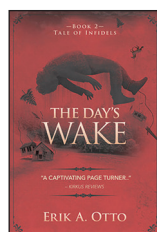


Adult

★ **The Day's Wake.** By Erik A. Otto.

2019. 192p. Sagis, paper, \$10.95 (9781732136120).

This second installment in Otto's *A Tale of Infidels* trilogy begins as a prediction in an ancient religious text—that “the world will turn” on the Day of Ascendancy—has come true. The world has literally turned upside



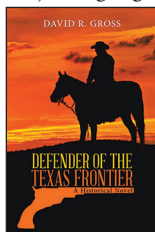
down after a gravity reversal, and objects, people, and animals have been torn from the safety of the earth. The Third Internecion, a period of chaos and violence that is prophesied to follow, will begin in 100 days. The main characters all have ties to one of the earlier protagonists, and as the plot lines develop and eventually intersect, those characters investigate clues about dramatic shifts in the world's ecology and archaeology to learn the real reason behind the destructive gravity change. As with the first novel, the story features memorable characters, a richly realized universe, and a solid sense of action, intrigue, and mysticism. Otto shines in depicting an atmosphere wracked by destruction, and his eye for detail summons a biting sense of reality. Readers willing to fully enter this world will be championing at the bit for the series' resolution.

★ **Defender of the Texas Frontier.** By David R. Gross.

2019. 242p. iUniverse, paper, \$13.99 (9781532071560).

John Coffee “Jack” Hays was the most famous and charismatic Texas Ranger during his tenure in the mid-1800s. In this meticulously researched novel, Gross brings Hays' story to life as narrated by his best friend, John Caperton, and various other friends and enemies of the heroic lawman. At 19 years old, Jack and

John arrive in Nacogdoches, where Jack begins establishing his reputation by killing the town bully in self-defense at the local saloon. After joining a group commanded by respected leader “Deaf” Smith, Jack quickly rises through the ranks to captain, then colonel, of what became known as the Texas Rangers. Jack and his men are successful in combating many threats to the encroaching settlers. Some of Hays' and his Texas

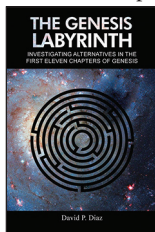


Rangers' exploits in this episodic novel are so similar that they border on repetitious. However, such similarities merely emphasize Hays' remarkable career and make one wonder how he possibly survived. Overall, this is a fascinating window into a little-understood period in America's past, as well as an absorbing story about one hero's westward expansion.

★ **The Genesis Labyrinth: Investigating Alternatives in the First Eleven Chapters of Genesis.** By David P. Diaz.

2019. 250p. Covenant, paper, \$17.95 (97816433008745). 220.

In these pages, Diaz focuses on the Book of Genesis's first 11 chapters, examining controversial positions of biblical scholars in response to age-old questions. He also adds his own opinions in a “nonthreatening way” and bids readers to weigh alternative views and decide their own beliefs about “the ultimate questions of life: Where do I come from? Why am I here?



Does life have purpose? or, Is [sic] this all there is?” The book is packed with intriguing alternatives to traditional understanding of subjects like the reliability of the Old Testa-

ment as historical truth, miracles, the origin of the universe, the time it took for creation, and the scope of Noah's flood—all backed up with meticulous attribution. Throughout, Diaz defines terms that are not necessarily understood by lay readers, such as “create,” “sin,” “Satan,” “cosmology,” “natural laws,” “spiritual laws,” and the “Dead Sea Scrolls.” Although the trend in our culture is for small bites, Diaz lays out a feast for us, resulting in a book that is highly recommended for readers who hold a biblical/Christian worldview or are motivated to learn more.

★ **The Girl Who Said Goodbye: A Memoir of a Khmer Rouge Survivor.** By Heather Allen.

2019. 337p. Heather Allen, paper, \$19.99 (9781643399553). 959.604.

Allen brings to life her aunt's voice in this gripping true story of horror and survival under the brutal Khmer Rouge regime (1975–79). In a violent military coup, Siv Eng and her siblings, the children of middle-class, prosperous, educated parents, are abruptly swept up in the communist takeover and forced to evacuate Phnom Penh in a march to remote jungle village labor camps. Through vignettes, flashbacks, and simple description, told through Siv Eng's eyes as her university career is interrupted, Allen creates a vivid portrait of a sophisticated culture plunged into a world of abuse and genocide. She details mass executions, years of forced labor, starvation, and disease, as well as an imprisonment where she witnesses multiple horrors, including suffocation punishments for stealing infractions: “. . . the Khmer Rouge placed a plastic bag over the victim's head and kept it there until the person was asphyxiated. Before death, the bag was briefly removed, and the process was



started over again.” This is a story that must be told. With uncomplicated prose in which little is sugarcoated, Allen delivers an exceptional, arresting work.

The Gringo's Hawk: Seeking Paradise in Southern Costa Rica (before the Highway).

By Jon Maraño.

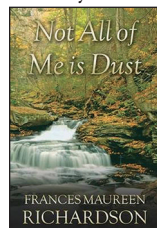
2018. 262p. Xlibris, paper, \$19.99 (9781543445114). 333.75.

This memoir plays out in the 1970s, '80s, and '90s after Maraño, a solitary, aimless surfer and diver, came to southern Costa Rica's Pacific coast as a college sophomore for a term abroad. Given the chance to buy 400 acres near the town of Morita, he jumped at the promise of a new, unscripted life in the tropics. Maraño recounts violent highs and lows as the young Anglo tests his mettle in a remote, mostly Indigenous culture. He weighs epic failures against solutions that often require moral compromises. His cattle herd flourishes with gentle, humane treatment, for example, but is brutally slaughtered at market by buyers wielding sledgehammers. Eventually, Maraño grows his property to 4,000 acres, builds an adventure-tourism lodge, starts a family, and advocates for those less fortunate and for the country's natural wonders. Maraño is a master storyteller who skillfully describes friends living simple lives and the nature around him. All his grandiose, youthful dreams didn't come true, but he did his part—all one man can really hope for.

★ **Not All of Me Is Dust.**
By Frances Maureen Richardson.

2016. 344p. CreateSpace, paper, \$15.95 (9781515358824).

As Richardson's finely crafted novel about three siblings gets underway, Kathleen and Stephen Engle are teens and the youngest, Clare, still a child when their mother dies in a car accident. Kathleen then acts as Clare's surrogate mother, and Stephen, something of a literary mentor, encourages his younger sister to “Read, Clare, read. Fill your mind with the beauty of words. . . .” Clare is particularly taken by the virgin martyrs of the



first centuries after Christ, as well as the North American martyrs. By contrast, Kathleen is an “uninspired learner,” while Stephen is a “thoughtful, attentive, dazzling student.” As a college senior, Stephen discovers his calling to become a Jesuit.

Likewise, Clare aspires to a church life, while Kathleen remains secular. Each encounters trials with the power to change their paths. The story is grounded in knowledge of literature, history, and politics, particularly as they relate to religion and spirituality. The writing is sharp, the plot intriguing, and the characters human, with weaknesses and secrets. Anyone seeking an intelligent, well-

informed, and absorbing story layered with meaning is sure to find this a satisfying read.

The Vows: A Workbook for Marriage Success and Understanding Yourself.

By Dr. Michelle R. Hannah.

2019. 206p. iUniverse, paper, \$13.99 (9781532064234). 152.

Hannah is a relationship coach with a doctorate in spiritual counseling. What she started in 2017 as an eight-week program for couples that “delves into the meaning and benefits of the [standard wedding] vows” evolved into this book, designed to “give you clarity about what peace, happiness, balance and love feel like for both of you.” Hannah walks readers through the marriage vows, from “To Have and to Hold” to “As Long as We Both Shall Live,” interpreting the meaning of each. Relevant questions follow, such as “Do I keep score of everything my partner does wrong?” and “Can my partner and I live through a serious illness?” with space provided for written answers. The final chapter, “Vows to Yourself,” precedes the author's personal and inspiring love story. By book's end, readers will have considered a gamut of questions about themselves and their relationships that will help them better understand who they are and what they require from a partner. Beautifully written, with a powerful message, this workbook ultimately shows us how to think about love not just with our hearts, but also with our heads.

Youth

★ **The Hidden King.**
By E. G. Radcliff.

2019. 316p. Mythic Prairie, paper, \$15.95 (9781733673327).

In this intriguing YA hero's journey, Aed has crippled hands and magical powers. He lives with his same-sex life partner and Ronan, a little boy they have raised since birth, in an impoverished, dangerous area known as The Maze. Following a tragedy, Aed and Ronan leave for The White City, a richer, safer area where Aed hopes for a better life. Upon arrival, they meet Boudicca, a good-hearted woman who provides them shelter. However, Boudicca's brother, general of the guard for the corrupt king, has other plans for them because of their criminal status as refugees. Thus, Aed learns he has escaped a hard life, only to find that more struggles—and a surprising destiny—await him. Radcliff smoothly depicts Aed's recovery from horrific torture and skillfully sprinkles in a few Gaelic



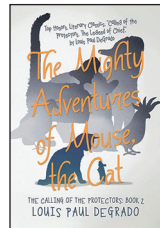
words to suggest a different language without overwhelming readers. The author brings the main characters fully alive, keeps a brisk pace, and delivers stirring action scenes, all

with an engaging writing style. Intended as the first in a series, the story will be enjoyed by fantasy readers of all ages.

★ **The Mighty Adventures of Mouse, the Cat: The Calling of the Protectors, Book 2.**
By Louis Paul DeGrado.

2019. 204p. iUniverse, paper, \$13.99 (9781532068386).

The second book in DeGrado's middle-grade Calling of the Protectors series focuses on small but brave Mouse the cat, daughter of a Protector: cats of a special lineage whose responsibility is to protect humans from evil.



Mouse organizes an ambitious mission to rescue two friends from a shelter whose owners are cruel to the animals. Scratch and Dazzle are set free, but Mouse worries about those left behind and arranges to rescue the others. But

this time the mission's outcome is even more uncertain, as the journey to the country, which will be the freed animals' destination, is full of dangers, from ferocious wild dogs to bloodthirsty raptors. As the story unfolds, readers witness Mouse's insightful leadership and the team's courageous acts. They also meet eccentric characters, including a sulphur-crested cockatoo; Colonel Wellington, leader of The Pigeon Brigade, whose hesitance to help cats is overtaken by his love for adventure; and Streets, a shabby, lanky rat who knows everything going on around town. Song lyrics add excitement and help tell the story or instill lessons. In all, readers will savor this delightful story full of thrilling adventures that impart valuable lessons.

Night, Night Tree Frogs.
By Julie Carroll.

2020. 36p. Lulu, paper, \$11.99 (9780578222691).

With a rhythmic pattern similar to “one little monkey jumping on the bed,” *Night Night, Tree Frogs* tells a story of a frog on a tree whose friends join him one by one, eventually weighing down the branch enough that it snaps. The friends are in a tizzy at first. “Hopping in the grass./ This way and that way, / In circles they would pass,” writes Carroll. But then the first tree frog on the branch comes to their rescue, calling to the other six to “all hop together” to “find our tree.” With this leadership, they locate the original tree and go to sleep—but on separate branches this time. The charming tale is enhanced by colorful, polished illustrations that distinguish the tree frogs with differently colored polo shirts and props, such as a tiny guitar or a jump rope. The plot is straightforward, and its familiarity when re-read will appeal to many young children. The simple diction is approachable for early readers. While the meter is stretched in one spot, overall *Night Night, Tree Frogs* offers beginning readers a fun and easy new tale to love.