

# Book 'Em

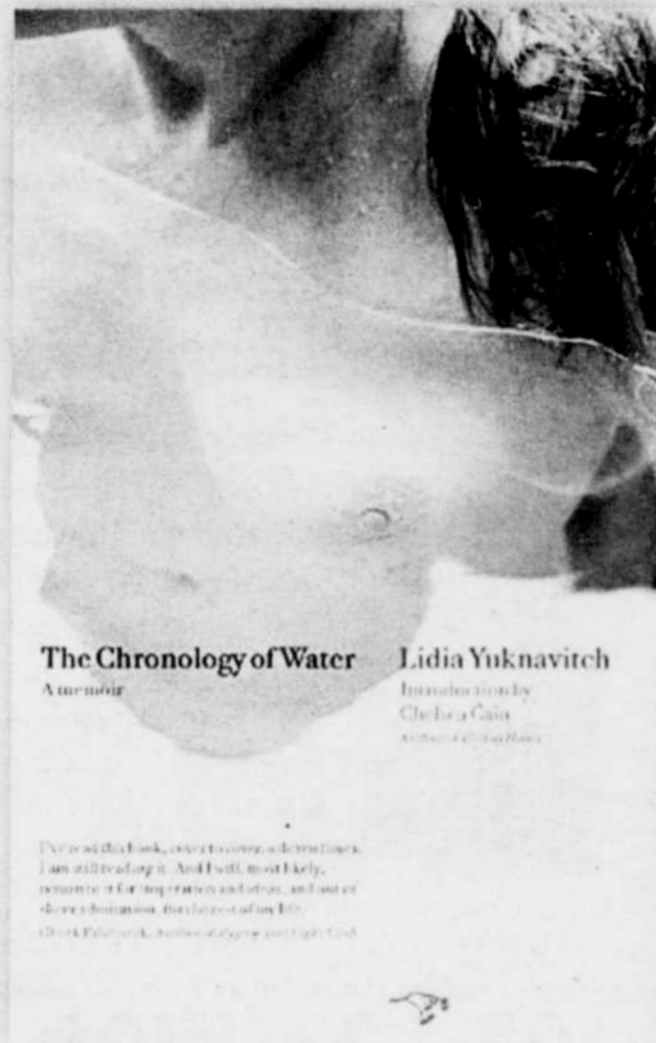
Temps dip, leaves fall, pages turn. *Just Out's* columnists share their current favorites.



**Daniel Borgen,**  
LADY ABOUT TOWN  
**THE CHRONOLOGY OF WATER: A MEMOIR**  
*Lidia Yuknavitch,*  
*Hawthorne Books & Literary Arts, \$15.95*

There are books you read leisurely, consuming handfuls of pages over days and weeks. There are others you gobble up in one sitting, books that stir insatiable questioning and wondering about humanity, truth and, yes, love. Lidia Yuknavitch's *The Chronology of Water* falls into the latter camp—and could, in fact, encompass one all its own. In this harrowing memoir, Yuknavitch, lifelong swimmer and one-time Olympic hopeful, accepts a swimming scholarship to escape an alcoholic, suicidal mother and abusive father. Subsequently, Yuknavitch's own addictions cause her to lose that beloved lifeline—and the self-destruction that ensues is captivating and haunting: sexual experimentation, S&M, drugs—and eventually, fulfillment in writing, marriage and motherhood.

The principal metaphor here—that we all struggle to keep our heads above water, finding what joy we can in life despite endless reasons not to—is certainly universally applicable. That Yuknavitch made it through the fire and survived is reason enough to marvel; that, as a result, she crafted 300 pages of the most beautiful, dazzling, challenging prose I've ever laid my eyes on is inspirational. *The Chronology of Water* is brave, difficult and evocative. This isn't a book about finding happiness. Readers won't always love this protagonist and narrator. But, as one absorbs every bit of wisdom, cultural and social insight, and satisfaction, he realizes this was the book Lidia Yuknavitch was meant to write. And our world is a better place because she did.



**The Chronology of Water** Lidia Yuknavitch  
Introduction by  
Chelsea Cain  
Author of *Call Home*

The world is a book, and those who do not read, miss it. I am still reading it. And I will, most likely, continue to do so for as long as I live. —Lidia Yuknavitch, *The Chronology of Water*



**Kristin Flickinger,**  
ASK A GAY  
**THE WELL OF TIME**  
*Julie Raymond, Author-*  
*House, \$15.99*

*The Well of Time* is the first installment in an inspired seven-part series (*We The Trees*) by Julie Raymond. Book One takes us on a journey deep into the past, to a time when female warriors roamed the lands of the east, guarding the divine feminine and all of the ancient wisdom surrounding it.

We follow Alana Bell, an archaeologist, as she embarks on a trek from present day into Amazigh country, traveling inside the body of Issaura, an

ancient female warrior. The journey, sparked by a lightning strike that brings the women together across time, takes us into warring lands, secret underground hiding places, and through sacred visions. It's a time when queens commune with lionesses and falcons, princesses are smuggled to safety through hostile territory, and priestess healers read the signs. For Issaura, these signs are clear. The visions seen through her eyes—which have turned from brown to green—are clear enough for all to read, and the strange language she sometimes speaks points to the presence of another.

Raymond's book is "woo woo" out there, combining a classic fantasy feel with the spiritual reminder that we all carry with us the memories of those who came before.



**Nick Mattos,**  
REMEMBER TO BREATHE  
**META MAUS: A NEW LOOK INSIDE A MODERN CLASSIC, MAUS**  
*Art Spiegelman, Pantheon, \$35*

*MetaMaus*, Art Spiegelman's long-awaited companion to his Pulitzer Prize-winning graphic memoir offers readers insight into the Holocaust and its lingering effects while illuminating the creative process of a brilliant and challenging artist.

The publisher aptly describes *MetaMaus* as a "vast *Maus* midrash"—a thick homily composed of copious notes and backstories about the people and situations that *Maus* depicted in animal form. A lengthy Q&A with University of Chicago professor Hillary Chute and interviews with Spiegelman's family, alongside hundreds of illustrations and photos and a supple-



mental DVD with enough special features to rival a Hollywood release, thoroughly answer many questions that readers have posed in the two decades since the publication of *Maus*.

However, *MetaMaus* transcends the basic queries—*Why comics? Why mice? Why the Holocaust?*—to present stunning revelations into the artistic and intellectual process of a man who sought to ensure that his family's experiences were never forgotten, despite his own sense of being haunted by the events that unfolded in the concentration camps. "In a story that is trying to make chronological and coherent the incomprehensible," Spiegelman reflects upon his use of the comic form, "the juxtaposing of past and present insists that the past and present are always present." Unsettling and thought-provoking, *MetaMaus* deepens the impact of a modern classic while standing on its own as a meditation on the creative process, illustrating the ways that we are tethered to our personal and collective history.

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