

Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis by J. D.

Vance. HarperCollins, \$27.95.

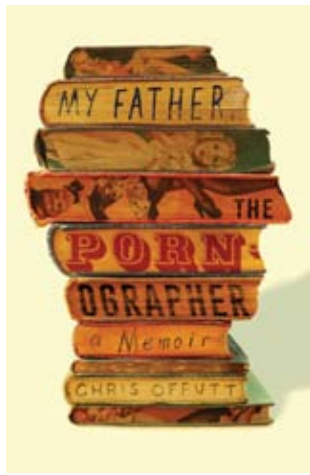
J. D. Vance and his *Hillbilly Elegy* are everywhere: near the top of *The New York Times* nonfiction bestseller list, carefully reviewed in *The New Yorker*, interviewed by Terry Gross and so much more. Subtitled “A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis” this book was written well before the election of Donald Trump, but it does resonate with reasons for his win. It also reminds us of the fraud that Trump has played on this strata of America.

Vance writes of his dysfunctional family’s move from the despair of Appalachian Kentucky to the despair of rust-belt Ohio, and the unconditional love from his grandparents, Mamaw and Papaw — a love that certainly propelled his climb from hillbilly to Yale Law School graduate, that old American dream, with a four-year stint in the Marines and undergraduate work at Ohio State. He served in Iraq, although that period receives almost no attention except that it prepared him to succeed in college.

If you grew up during the Great Depression, as some of us did, you saw dads without jobs drinking too much, fighting in bars, embarrassed to bring home cornmeal, oleo or beans issued by the government, finally getting some kind of a work with Franklin Roosevelt’s Works Progress Administration. Heroin and other drugs were not the trap that they were in Vance’s growing up, and the economy didn’t really improve until preparations for World War II, but we remember a sense of hope that seems absent today.

Vance does not write about it, but a carefully strategized campaign has turned Americans against government and the hope that it can bring. Remember the famous Grover Norquist line about shrinking government until it will fit into the bathtub? Trump ran with that strategy, “drain the swamp,” and he continues to also attack the press, even the Constitution.

This is where we part from J.D. Vance and his fascinating book. He says, “Public policy can help, but there is no government that can fix these problems for us ... we created them and only we can fix them.” Certainly, we all must try to fix these problems, though enlightened public policy must be a player. — Anita Johnson



My Father, the Pornographer: A Memoir by Chris Offutt. Atria Books, \$26.

In terms of psychic warfare, one of the greatest battles of a man’s life is coming to grips with the influence of his father, and Chris Offutt certainly has a battle on his hands here. “My father was a brilliant man, a true iconoclast, fiercely self-reliant, a dark genius, cruel, selfish and eternally optimistic,” Offutt writes. His father, who died in rural Kentucky in 2012, was also one of the leading writers of pre-internet porn throughout the ’70s and ’80s, and in this memoir Offutt digs, literally and figuratively, through the 18,000 pounds of pornographic fiction left behind in Andrew Offutt’s cramped archives. In clear, concise prose that cuts right to the bone, Offutt plays emotional archeologist, peering ever deeper into the secret life of his father while at the same time detailing the devastating story of a family ruled by an emotional tyrant. The results are profound. Not only does Offutt achieve a kind of hard reckoning with his father’s legacy, but he also creates a vulnerable and moving portrait of his own development as an artist, a husband and a father. — Rick Levin

Pit Bull: The Battle Over an American Icon by Bronwen Dickey. Alfred A. Knopf, \$26.95.

Full disclosure: I’m a pit bull fan. My rescue pittie, Biggie, brings joy to my life and greets all and sundry with a wiggle butt and a demand for love. That said, a lot of people look at Bigs and his cropped ears and blocky head and retreat in horror. Bronwen Dickey traces the history of pit bulls and just how they came to be so maligned (and mistreated). Dickey pulls out the usual points that pit-lovers use — Pete the Pup

of *The Little Rascals* was a pit bull, Helen Keller had a pit and Teddy Roosevelt was a pit-bull person. Dickey also meticulously debunks dubious theories that have been spread about pit bulls — that they bite extra hard, that their jaws lock. She links some of the hate for pits to racism and a hate for the poor — dog fighting, with which pits are long associated, historically comes from the lower classes and pits are scorned as a poor person’s dog, associated with the urban poor. Cities will over-police African-American neighborhoods using the excuse that they are enforcing breed bans, and she says language used to describe pit bulls and those who own them is often racially charged, such as “thug.” Dickey hits home with well-researched facts and the idea that we humans shape the lives of our dogs. — Camilla Mortensen



The Black Mirror: Fragments of an Obituary for Life

by Raymond Tallis. Yale University Press, \$30.

More a celebration of life than a brooding exploration of morbidity, I was pleasantly surprised by this book. It is more-or-less a 344-page prose-poem, cataloguing the inescapable reality that the author himself will die, exploring the process, people, spaces and ways that living and

dying are woven into each other in a fashion that cannot be untangled.

Tallis always addresses himself in the third person as RT, which took some adjusting to.

Tallis’ resume makes him an interesting candidate for writing a book on mortality. He is described as a poet, novelist, philosopher, former professor of geriatric medicine and consultant physician. There is a scientific rigor to some of the writing, complemented by philosophical depth, poetic freedom and playfulness. Much of it reads like a list of the minutiae of everyday life that will be left behind, from the most mundane

“up in my grill”

You may not understand everything kids say. But that’s ok. You don’t have to be perfect to be a perfect parent. Because kids in foster care don’t need perfection. They need you. AdoptUsKids.org

Ad Council logo, AdoptUsKids logo.

HOLIDAY FARMERS MARKET
Through December 18th
At Lane Events Center (Fairgrounds)
Saturdays 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Sundays 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Last chance to spend your Double Up Food Bucks is Dec. 18th!
LaneCountyFarmersMarket.org

DOUBLE UP FOOD BUCKS OREGON logo, Lane County Farmers Market logo.

FACTORY STORE
We're more than just honey

GloryBee
FAMILY OWNED
SINCE 1975

- Organic Baking & Cooking
- Natural Soap Making & Body Care
- Bulk or Prepackaged Products
- Candle Making • Essential Oils
- Honeys • Beekeeping Supplies

STORE HOURS
MON - FRI: 9:30 AM - 5:30 PM
SAT: 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

GloryBee.com | 800-456-7923 | 29548 B Airport Road, Eugene

COUPON EXPIRES DECEMBER 18, 2016

SAVE \$10
on your purchase
of \$60 or more

LIMIT ONE COUPON PER PURCHASE - EXCLUDES SELECTED SALE ITEMS
COUPON GOOD ONLY FOR FACTORY STORE PURCHASES