

BlackSun Books TOP TEN

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The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate by Peter Wohlleben. Greystone Books, \$24.95.

Garden Time: Poems by W. S. Merwin. Copper Canyon Press, \$24.

The Kitchen Creamery: Making Yogurt, Butter, & Cheese At Home by Louella Hill. Chronicle Books, \$29.95.

Commonwealth: A Novel by Ann Patchett. Harper, \$27.99.

Love Factually: 10 Proven Steps From I Wish to I Do by Duana C. Welch. LoveScience Media, \$15.99.

Lucky Peach Presents Power Vegetables! Turbocharged Recipes for Vegetables with Guts by Peter Meehan. Clarkson Potter, \$35.

The Underground Railroad: A Novel by Colson Whitehead. Doubleday, \$26.95

Look: Poems by Solmaz Sharif. Graywolf Press, \$16.

The Littlest Family's Big Day by Emily Winfield Martin. Random House, \$17.99.

Night Sky With Exit Wounds: Poems by Ocean Vuong. Copper Canyon Press, \$16.

• = Oregon Author or Oregon-Centric Book

spent the past year testing America's gag reflex and proved that it may no longer be functioning. But so what?

Reading Rall's *Trump*, I felt like a guest at a stale Democratic Party fundraiser: Have you heard the one about how Trump is worse than — whichever is your least favorite histrionic Eastern European fascist mass murderer of yore? "Trump can seem likeable," Rall writes.



"Funny. Hilarious, even. Mussolini had remarkable charisma too. Hitler could be funny, even droll."

Rall submits to talking-point temptations again and again, as though repeating such lazy parallels for the nth time

might finally move the needle. Is he clueless to the fact that the Oval Office has played roost to a long and crooked line of megalomaniacal bigots, hilarious incompetents, would-be goodfellas and genocidal perverts?

While the presidential race was in full TV ratings slop-trough mode, I switched back and forth between the pages of Rall's impotent *Trump* and Doug Henwood's merciless onslaught *My Turn: Hillary Clinton Targets the Presidency*.

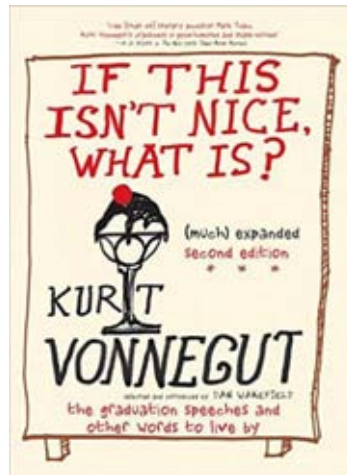
Though Henwood dismantles the progressive mythology Clinton spent a lifetime cultivating, his book is not partisan; Henwood isn't so much lashing one crooked candidate but strapping a bomb to the load-bearing pillars holding up our purest political ideals.

The system is rotten, mouth to anus, and the author sketches for us a caricature of the type of individual who wants a piece of that action. It becomes clear almost right off the bat why revolutionary change has never come from the top.

With Clinton off licking her wounds in the

woods somewhere, it's hard to imagine there exists much appetite for a book like Henwood's, but *My Turn* could become an American classic if the nation holds together with Trump at the wheel. — Ben Ricker

essays



If This Isn't Nice, What Is?: The Graduation speeches and Other Words to Live By by Kurt Vonnegut. Seven Stories Press, \$23.95.

Reading the words of Kurt Vonnegut changed my life, and they continue to do so, even though the man himself shuffled off to the sweet beyond in 2007. I'll bet I'm not the only person who misses the hell out of Vonnegut these days, what with a clown like Trump heading into office and the apocalypse inching ever closer. Throughout his long career, in novel after novel, Vonnegut sounded the alarm on human stupidity in a voice that was by turns righteously grumpy and painfully funny — the angry, hangdog uncle whose witty barbs hid the heartbreak of a humanist at the absolute end of his rope. The speeches and essays collected here are pure, distilled Vonnegut: chiding, tart and, in the end, disarmingly sweet. They argue for decency and common sense in a manner and tone that is now, sadly, almost entirely absent from public discourse. "Still, the issue remains the same," Vonnegut writes in a 1984 article for *Playboy*.

"Can the Constitution of the United States be made a scrap of paper by appeals to what sincere persons believe the laws of God and nature to be? If we let that happen, I see no reason why we can't get back to the good old American practices of lynching and even slavery again. What better way to fight crime?" The book is full of such gallows humor, which provides an oddly comforting antidote to the madness that now surrounds us. — Rick Levin



Seven Brief Lessons on Physics

by Carlo Rovelli. Penguin Random House, \$18.

If, like me, you have only the most passing acquaintance with the theories and discoveries of contemporary physics, prepare

to have your mind blown: Italian physicist Carlo Rovelli's almost impossibly slim volume sets out, in clear and often poetic language, the rudiments of that most beguiling and baffling of scientific fields, and the results are breathtaking. From Einstein's theory of relativity to the complexities of quantum mechanics, from quarks to infinity, Rovelli — head of the Quantum Gravity group at Aix-Marseille University — lays out the basic tenets of contemporary physics, and in doing so he utterly demolishes the false philosophical barriers raised by the Enlightenment. Who knew that without heat (combustion) there is no time (reality as we know it)? And could the universe really be a chain-mail construction of intersecting loops of time curling into infinity? Forget about *The Matrix*, forget about *Westworld* and all that speculative mumbo-jumbo about alternate realities: This is the good stuff! Deeply existential and at times downright metaphysical, Rovelli's cutting-edge investigations cut right to the heart of those eternal questions: Who are we, why are we here and what the hell is going on? — Rick Levin

Read Local: A Roundup

BY CAMILLA MORTENSEN

When it comes to "buy local," that suggestion can apply to your reading as well. Throughout the year, local authors drop off their books at *EW* or send links to their e-published work. We can't read them all, but somebody should. So we offer you our annual self-published roundup.

Luminare Press stands in Lane County as a polished producer of local self-published books. Tomes with the Luminare imprint are almost indistinguishable from those from major publishers and authors have heaped praise on Luminare and owner/editor Patricia Marshall for ushering their carefully wrought words through the process of getting them on page and released to the general public.

Notable from Luminare in 2016 are: **Born to Heal: Heal Yourself, Heal the World** (\$19.95, lukeadlerhealing.com) by Luke Adler, a self-help book that has "75 exercises and meditations, illustrations, case studies and personal stories" that will "inspire courage and help you develop and trust your inner guidance."

Artist Cynthia Herron's memoir **Paint By Number: An Artist's Quest for Meaning** (\$37.95, cynthiaherron.com) ponders "When did I become a serious artist? What drove me to paint? Did early paintings hint at my mature voice? How did I find that voice? Why had I been plagued with doubt?" after experiencing letdown at the end of an art show.

And the children's book **I'm Still Me Can't You See? Diabetes Won't Stop Me!** (\$14.95, hergenreterbooks.com) written by Valorie Hergenreter and illustrated by Mariann Asbury explores diabetes through the eyes of a child conquering the disease.

Also published through Luminare is Terrence Heintz's **Words — Life's Tutelage: A Secular Bible for the New Millennium**. Heintz is a Eugene resident, but according to an article in his previous hometown paper, the Massachusetts-based *The Journal Register*,



"the book represents several years of research into a variety of spiritual messages."

Local naturalist Whitey Lueck's **Staying Put in Lane County** (CreateSpace on Amazon, \$15) is a Tsunami Books staff pick. The book chronicles Lueck's choice to purposely spend an entire calendar year within Lane County an "exercise of self-restraint that enables him to reflect on some of the characteristics of the vast and varied county he calls home."

Also a Tsunami pick is **Housewife: Home(re)making in a Transgender Marriage** by Kristin Collier. (Abbondanza \$16). The memoir discusses how Collier and her husband struggled to decide "whether and how to stay together after it becomes apparent to him that he is transgender." The story doesn't end when the book does, Collier, who lives with and parents as partners with her former husband updates readers at kristincollier.com.

A third Tsunami pick is **Mindful Relationships: Seven Skills for Success** by B. Grace Bullock (Handspring \$29.50, bgracebullock.com), which "integrates the science of mind, body and brain to reveal how chronic stress undermines our social bonds, and what we can do about it."

Black Sun Books also features local publishers in its top 10. **Love Factually: 10 Proven Steps from I Wish to I Do** by Duana C. Welch (LoveScience Media \$15.99, lovefactually.co) is "the first science-based book that guides men and women through every phase of dating, from before they meet until they make a commitment."

Finally, L.J. Sellers is a prolific producer of mysteries and thrillers set in Eugene. This year's offerings are **The Gender Experiment: A Crime Thriller** (Spellbinder Press \$12.99) and **Death Deserved: A Detective Jackson Mystery Book 11** (Thomas and Mercer, Amazon \$15.95). Find her at ljsellers.com.