

nonfiction

Dear Ijeawele, or A Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions

by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Knopf, \$15.

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Ngozi Adichie
Dear Ijeawele,
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Though slim, this manifesto is a masterpiece. Each suggestion is thoughtful, meditating on the problems of patriarchy. Adichie is passionate, but her anger is not biting. When she criticizes the patriarchy, she seems amused by the poor logic behind society's failings. This book is deeply rooted in the Nigerian female experience, but the

trappings of that culture are easily mirrored in this one. Her writing is deeply personal: The book is written as a letter to her close friend, who has just birthed a daughter. Here's an example from the sixth suggestion: "Teach her to question language. Language is the repository of all our prejudices, our beliefs, our assumptions. But to teach her that, you will have to question your own language." But Adichie's suggestions always extend toward a clearheaded analysis of society at large: "Teach her to question men who can have empathy for women only if they see them as relational rather than as individual equal humans." *Dear Ijeawele* is an excellent candidate for your coffee table, and the lessons in it are, unfortunately, pretty timeless. — Kelly Kenoyer



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History of Wolves by Emily Fridlund. Grove, \$16.

Elmet by Fiona Mozley. Algonquin, \$15.95.

Manhattan Beach by Jennifer Egan. Scribner, \$28.
Local author Cai Emmons calls this "... One of the best novels I've read in years, beautifully plotted and researched, with characters who are as fully dimensional as anyone I know and language that is gorgeous."

Future Home of the Living God: A Novel
by Louise Erdrich. Harper, \$28.99.

Where The Past Begins: A Writer's Memoir
by Amy Tan. Ecco, \$28.99.

The Art of Loading Brush
by Wendell Berry. Counterpoint, \$26.
Our great agrarian essayist and philosopher brings us a new book filled with insights and new revelations.

The Inner Life of Animals by Peter Wohlleben.
Greystone, \$24.95.

■ *Birding Without Borders* by Noah Strycker.
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, \$27.

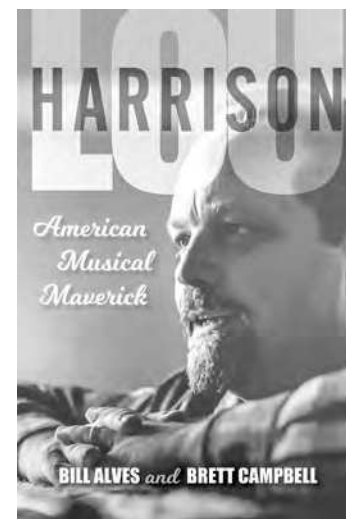
Eugene born and raised, Strycker wrote a memoir of his Big Year, a seven-continent journey to note more bird species in a year than anyone ever before.

Fantasyland: How America Went Haywire: A 500 Year History by Kurt Andersen. Random House, \$30.

Devotions: Selected Poems of Mary Oliver.
Penguin, \$30.

Lou Harrison: American Musical Maverick

by Bill Alves and Brett Campbell. Indiana University Press, \$55 (paper).



Perhaps the most influential Oregon native you've never actually heard of was the avant-garde musical pioneer Lou Harrison, who managed to be born in Portland in 1917 and then almost immediately depart for places he was more likely to make an artistic mark, such as San Francisco, where he learned about Chinese opera and enjoyed the 1930s

gay community, and North Carolina's Black Mountain College, where he took part in "happenings" with the likes of John Cage and Merce Cunningham. In this hefty (583 pages) but readable biography, Southern California composer Bill Alves joins forces with *Eugene Weekly's* own classical music writer Brett Campbell (OK, Brett also writes for such lesser-known publications as the *Wall Street Journal*, the *San Francisco Chronicle* and *Oregon ArtsWatch*) to illuminate the life of the man they call "the godfather of world music." The result is a detailed account that combines serious music history with dishy gossip in just the right proportion to keep non-musical readers awake while offering them a substantial account of 20th-century American culture. — Bob Keefer



Tell Me The Old Story

The Odyssey rendered by a woman BY EMILY DUNNAN

The song of a blind bard in ancient Greece still echoes through the halls of imagination and the chambers of our minds. Homer's *Odyssey*, epic in every sense of the word, resonates in the 21st century on a deep level, speaking to the universality of human dilemmas across time.

Odysseus, the eponymous hero, can be interpreted variously as an arrogant bastard seeking glory, a veteran suffering PTSD, or a conflicted husband and father voyaging homeward. His journey home after sacking Troy consumes much of the narrative, but so do the struggles of his wife and son and his eventual homecoming.

Emily Wilson is the first woman to publish an English translation of *The Odyssey*. In an email to me, she clarifies that plenty of women, like Sarah Ruden, have translated the classics, and that women do read ancient Greek poetry.

But Wilson's translation clearly involved more thought and research than an extempore reading.

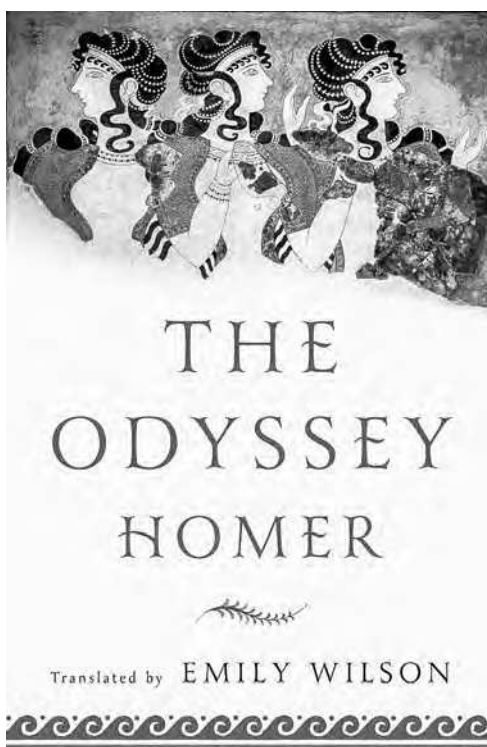
Translating poetry is a tricky business. The translator, necessarily both a poet and a scholar, walks a tightrope between meter and meaning, Greek idiom and common English.

Wilson has struck the golden mean in sleek, modern English. Her iambic pentameter is robust and fluid, propelling the reader through adventure after adventure.

Homer's poem was written in hexameter, with six syllabic units per line. Wilson says she chose iambic pentameter because it is natively English — the rhythm of such greats as Chaucer, Shakespeare, Byron and Keats. ("Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?")

Wilson's word choice is particularly contemporary — for example, Menelaus serves "canapés" at his house. Some classicists prefer using archaic language when translating the ancients, and take issue with Wilson's modern style.

However, Wilson tells me she writes in clear, speakable English to mark her awareness



that her readers live in 2017, and that the English of the 1930s is no more like ancient Greek than today's English is.

Wilson says she tried to create a standalone piece of literature that has its own power and life. She succeeded.

Her poetry reads with the pace of a novel. Even her section titles feel like this: My favorite title is Book 6, "A Princess and Her Laundry," chronicling that one time when Odysseus ended up naked by a river and met a foreign princess washing her clothes.

Wilson provides a fresh take on the women of *The Odyssey*. She comments in a translator's note that her Helen, the beautiful cause of the Trojan War, "refrains from blaming herself for what men have done in her name."

Evinced by her characterizations of other women in the epic, Wilson says she wants to "allow the reader to feel deep and genuine sympathy for the female characters."

In the end, why should you read *The Odyssey*? Wilson says it addresses many strikingly pertinent questions: Are you interested in whether your identity depends on your relationships? Or what you should do for migrants and refugees? Whether gender is fixed? Whether war permanently damages a people? What binds a family together? What it means to have a home?

You've come to the right place.

"I wanted the language to come alive, and each of the characters to come alive too," Wilson says in conclusion. "I hope that people who read my translation will find themselves feeling the suspense and pace of the story, and caring deeply about what happens to each of these characters."

The Odyssey is full of characters whose struggles shed light on our issues today. Indeed, on the very first page the poet invokes the muse, "tell the old story for our modern times."

The Odyssey, W.W. Norton, \$39.95