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# Winter Reading

## poetry

**Brown: Poems** by Kevin Young. Penguin Random House, \$27.

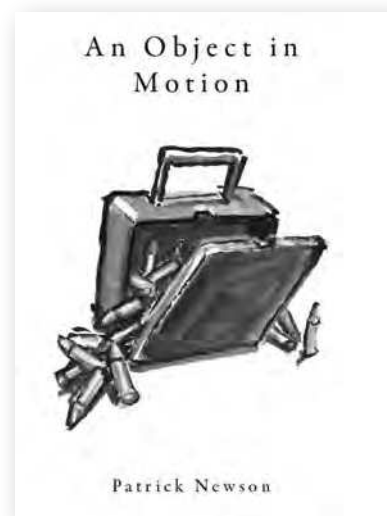
*Brown*, a poetry collection by Kevin Young, is about a lot of things. It's a meditation on not only brownness as an identity — a lot of these poems center around Young's childhood as a black kid in Kansas — but "brown" as an encompassing theme. The collection is carried by an undercurrent of art, music, sports and culture, along with more solipsistic ideas of self. "Brown" comes across sometimes literally, with poems mentioning James Brown and *Brown vs. Board of Education* — the "scrolled brown arms of the church pews curve like a bone," Young writes in the title piece. Other times, "brown" is more of an enveloping feeling, which sometimes comes alive with warmth — a pride in the beauty, strength and glory of brownness. In other glimpses, it's a look at the shame and self-pity that inherently comes with growing up brown; in an early piece, Young recalls the time when a racist neighbor would not let him play on her swing set. Overall, *Brown* is a beautiful collection of pieces revolving around not only the things that separate us, but those that bring us together. My favorites from this collection are "Flame Tempered," "A Roller Skating Jam Named Saturdays" and "Triptych for Trayvon Martin." — *Meerah Powell*

**An Object in Motion** by Patrick

Newson. Nomadic Press, \$12.

When I first met the writer Pat Newson, he was a bent wild man, part satanic elf and part hobbled saint, and his whole being bled black ink and raw, embryonic desire. I immediately identified something precious and endangered in the short stories he wrestled to the page: a true writer's voice, tender and brutal and wise, something that can never be taught but which bubbles up from the primordial gunk of being, a pearl burnished by the jagged edges inside all of us.

Some years have passed since those heady, heartbreaking days, and now Newson has emerged from the belly of the whale with a new poetry collection, *An Object in Motion*. It is a staggering work. It took the wind right out of me, in the best way possible. It zapped me awake.



The collection is anchored in the theme of guns, much in the same way *Moby Dick* is anchored in the theme of whaling: Not didactically or ideologically, but rather as an intellectual and spiritual flashpoint, a flare that lights the way to an investigation into the totality of our American experience. They are forever grounded in the real, the meat and bone of lived experience, whether that is the writer's outdoorsy Northwest childhood or his more recent years residing in the battle zone of Oakland's urban core.

The truism "guns don't kill people, people kill people" is as stupid as it is true, and Newson's collection puts the lie to our whole sick gun culture — which, after all, is less about bullets than the lust for brutality that breathes itself into every stitch of our national fabric. — *Rick Levin*

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## teens

**Sleeping in My Jeans** by Corinne King Leonard. Ooligan Press, \$16.

Portland-based Ooligan Press is a sure thing when it comes to books that capture the Pacific Northwest, and *Sleeping in My Jeans* is no different — though it captures Eugene so specifically and perfectly I'm curious to see how readers from other areas respond to it.

The plight of 16-year-old Mattie is terribly familiar here in Eugene, and it shouldn't be. She's homeless. And to add to her struggles, her mom has disappeared with the car they've been living in, leaving Mattie together with her little sister, alone and scared.

Mattie, a biracial teen, is very real in Leonard's writing, and that's no surprise given her bio lists her as a former teacher whose book is inspired by her students' true stories. The book will no doubt strongly appeal to young teens — who may not be as thrown by the dramatic plot twist as I was — and teens should read it to understand the struggles fellow unhoused students face and dangers out there in the community. And the fact there's a cute love interest for Mattie involved doesn't hurt either. — *Camilla Mortensen*

**The Barrow Will Send What It May** (Danielle Cain Volume 2) by

Margaret Killjoy. Tor.com, \$11.99.

When I asked Tor.com to send me a copy of Sarah Gailey's *American Hippo* for review, I casually suggested the publisher toss in anything else *Eugene Weekly* readers might like. And thanks to Tor I now know there is a whole genre of fantasy fiction that features anarchist teens. Why was this not around when I was a teenager who badly needed to read about anarcho-punks kicking the asses of demons?

Well, I have it now. I normally hate jumping in on a series anywhere but book one, but *The Barrow Will Send What It May* is a slim volume, so I gave it a shot, despite it being Volume 2. No regrets. Did I mention these are anarchist demon-fighters? Killjoy breathes life into Danielle Crain and her band of anarchists on the lam who run into a small town featuring a couple residents who have come back from the dead. In Killjoy's fantastic world, fellow anarchists have taken over the library in this small town in Montana to keep it open and

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