

# In the mood for some fiction? Here's a look at books for your reading list

By **Malcolm Forbes**  
*Star Tribune*

## 'THE PROMISE'

by **Damon Galgut**

The title of this powerful, emotionally charged novel — winner of this year's Booker Prize — refers to a pledge made by Rachel Swart, the matriarch of a white South African family, to bequeath a house on her farm to loyal Black servant Salome. But when Rachel dies, so too does Salome's hope of claiming her inheritance. Galgut charts the wayward progress and mixed fortunes of Rachel's racist husband, Manie, and their three children — feckless Anton, faithless Astrid and guilt-ridden Amor — through subsequent decades, while simultaneously depicting a nation undergoing tumultuous change.

## 'RADIANT FUGITIVES'

by **Nawaaz Ahmed**

This hugely accomplished debut expertly traces the fault lines within a Muslim Indian family. After being cast off by her father, Seema has made a new life for herself in the West. In her last weeks of pregnancy

she is reunited at her home in San Francisco with her devoutly religious sister Tahera and their terminally ill mother, Nafeesa. But can they heal old wounds? Ahmed aims high and explores politics, race and his characters' fates through an extraordinary narrative voice — that of Seema's newborn (and at times unborn) son.

## 'MRS. MARCH'

by **Virginia Feito**

Spanish-born Feito's eponymous heroine exerts a strong hold on the reader. Mrs. March leads a charmed life on Manhattan's Upper East Side. But when she suspects that she was the inspiration for her author husband's latest protagonist — “a weak, plain, detestable, pathetic, unloved, unlovable wretch” — her safe world collapses. Soon she believes he is even capable of murder. With echoes of those doyennes of suspense Patricia Highsmith and Daphne du Maurier, this is a darkly comic portrait of a woman spiraling out of control.

## 'CHINA ROOM'

by **Sunjeev Sahota**

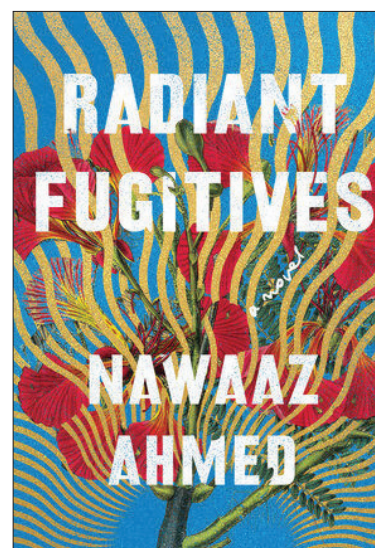
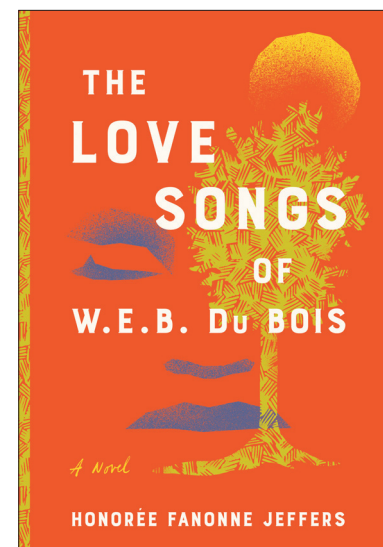
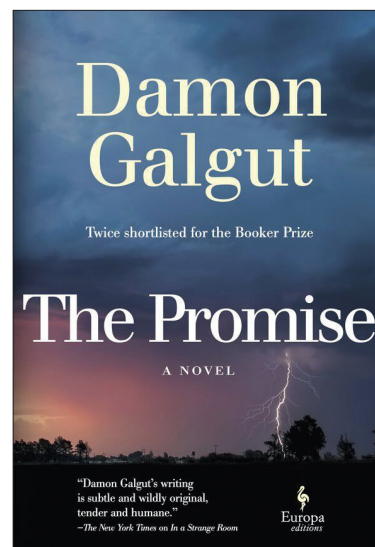
Sahota's bravura third novel

is made up of two neatly interwoven narratives set 70 years apart. In one strand, Mehar, a young bride, conducts an illicit romance with her husband's brother on a farm in rural Punjab in 1929. In the other, Mehar's great-grandson travels to the same location where he battles addiction and becomes curious about his relative's tragic history. An intense and moving depiction of endurance and defiance through the generations.

## 'OPEN WATER'

by **Caleb Azumah Nelson**

Two young Black British people meet, then fall passionately for each other. “What is better than believing you are heading towards love?” asks Azumah Nelson. Gradually, however, their relationship is tested by outside forces. The simple framework of this debut belies the riches within. The characters — he a photographer, she a dancer — are unnamed yet fully knowable, the prose is lush and rhythmic, and the bold use of second-person narration ensures that the situations and emotions are nothing less than intimate and intense.



## 'THE LOVE SONGS OF W.E.B. DU BOIS'

by **Honorée Fanonne Jeffers**

Weighing in at almost 800 pages and spanning two centuries, Jeffers' first novel is a