

Fireside Book Chats: Winter 2018



Alyssa's Fiction You May Have Missed 2018

Alderman, Naomi. *The Power*, (2017). Winner of the Baileys Prize, this dystopian novel asks: "What if women's bodies became deadly weapons?" Told through the voices of four individuals, Alderman shows us how this small twist of nature could completely change the world.

Arimah, Lesley Nneka. *What it Means When a Man Falls from the Sky*, (2017). **SHORT STORIES**. Comprised of scenes from Nigeria and of Nigerian expats in America, this book focuses on impeccable characterization and relationships. Though often quiet and subtle, these stories are powerful and insightful glimpses into individuals yearning for peace, comfort and home.

Babst, C. Morgan. *The Floating World*, (2017) **DEBUT**. This haunting and lyrical novel takes readers into the heart of Hurricane Katrina, explaining the racial history of New Orleans and the trauma and destruction endured by the city's most helpless and forgotten citizens.

Buntin, Julie. *Marlena*, (2017) **DEBUT**. Stories of intense, complex, and even obsessive female friendships have become very popular (Ferrante's Neapolitan novels or Cline's *The Girls*), but this one truly stands out from the pack. Narrated in the past tense, Cat reflects on her friendship with the beautiful and troubled Marlena.

Chaon, Dan. *Ill Will*, (2017). Multiple sinister storylines converge in this page-turner that is both an experimental and traditional mystery that keeps the reader guessing until the very end. Chaon is a master of horror and suspense – this one will keep you up at night!

Clemmons, Zinzi. *What We Lose*, (2017). Despite this novel's small size, author Zinzi Clemmons packs a punch with short chapters that leave a lasting impression. The novel covers a wide array of themes through protagonist Thandi, a young, African American girl coming of age and learning to deal with loss, motherhood and love.

Diaz, Hernan. *In the Distance*, (2017). A Swedish immigrant finds himself penniless and alone in the heart of the Wild West. He travels east in search of his brother, becoming an outlaw and a legend, fighting against a current of emigrants all pushing west. Diaz defies the conventions of historical fiction and genre, offering a probing look at the stereotypes that populate our past.

Greer, Andrew Sean. *Less*, (2017). If you've got the winter blues, this novel will have you doubled over in laughter. Arthur Less is a gay 49-yr-old man who, feeling like a failure in his career and his love life, decides to travel the world. Each chapter details Arthur's experience in a different country, where he finds himself in an endless string of humiliating and comedic situations.



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Locke, Attica. *Bluebird, Bluebird*, (2017). Locke utilizes expert characterization and pace in this classic murder mystery. It takes place in East Texas, where Locke is from, and her sense of love for this flawed place is palpable. Adding to the story is a deep meditation on race, class, and loyalty.

Machado, Carmen Maria. *Her Body and Other Parties*, (2017) **SHORT STORIES**. A finalist for the National Book Award this year, *Her Body...* is a wildly original group of stories that often utilizes outlandish myths in order to analyze the complicated, sexual and multifaceted aspects of womanhood. Highly recommended!

Miller, Kei. *Augustown*, (2017). Not-so-loosely based on the real August Town in Jamaica, *Augustown* is narrated by an unnamed, deceased narrator, looking down on her hometown. Miller vividly captures Jamaica's majesty, magic, beauty and brutality.

Phillips, Gin. *Fierce Kingdom*, (2017). Three generations of women are trapped in a zoo overtaken by shooters in this terrifying thriller. More than just a frightening premise, this book also serves as a commentary on the power of motherhood and the bonds between women.

Rooney, Sally. *Conversation with Friends*, (2017) **DEBUT**. This book follows two students and their knotted, lustful relationship with an older couple. Without employing quotation marks, this book is made up of conversations between the four that explore the human ego and youth in 2017.

Senna, Danzy. *New People*, (2017). In this wry and meditative novel, Danzy Senna explores the dynamics of race, identity and privilege in contemporary America through Maria and Kahlil, biracial protagonists on the verge of marriage.

Ward, Jesmyn. *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, (2017). Ward's novel is built around a long and arduous car trip involving a black woman and her two children on their way to visit their white father in prison. The past literally and figuratively haunts this tragic family and serves as a poetic critique of US history.

Williams, David. *When the English Fall*, (2017) **DYSTOPIAN**. A quietly riveting and unexpected novel that questions whether a peaceful and non-violent community can survive when civilization falls apart. Written in diary form, an Amish farmer is faced with protecting his family and his way of life in the face of deadly chaos.

