Geek Sublime
The Beauty of Code, the Code of Beauty
VIKRAM CHANDRA

The nonfiction debut from the author of the international best seller Sacred Games about the surprising overlap between writing and programming

Vikram Chandra has been a computer programmer for almost as long as he has been a novelist. In this extraordinary new book, his first work of nonfiction, he searches for the connections between the worlds of art and technology. Coders are obsessed with elegance and style, just as writers are, but do the words mean the same thing to both? Can we ascribe beauty to the craft of writing code?

Exploring such varied topics as logic gates and literary modernism, the machismo of tech geeks, the omnipresence of an “Indian Mafia” in Silicon Valley, and the writings of Abhinavagupta, the eleventh-century Kashmiri thinker, Geek Sublime is both an idiosyncratic history of coding and a fascinating meditation on the writer’s art. Part literary essay, part technology story, and part memoir, it is an engrossing, original, and heady book of sweeping ideas.

Praise for Sacred Games

“Bold, fresh and big. . . . Sacred Games deserves praise for its ambitions but also for its terrific achievement.” —Maureen Corrigan, NPR’s Fresh Air


“Ravishing . . . extraordinary. . . . A chaotic and luminous whole.” —Entertainment Weekly

“It’s a rare pleasure to be arrested by this novel’s thunderous momentum. . . . Few readers will be unenthralled.” —The Boston Globe

VIKRAM CHANDRA is the author of three highly acclaimed works of fiction, most recently Sacred Games, which won the Hutch Crossword Award for fiction in 2006. Chandra lives in Oakland and teaches at the University of California, Berkeley.
An Excerpt from On Immunity: An Inoculation

When I search now for a synonym for protect, my thesaurus suggests, after shield and shelter and secure, one final option: inoculate. This was the question, when my son was born—would I inoculate him? As I understood it then, this was not a question of whether I would protect him so much as it was a question of whether inoculation was a risk worth taking. Would I enter into a gamble, like Thetis dipping the infant Achilles into the River Styx?

The mothers I knew began debating whether or not to vaccinate our children against the novel influenza virus long before any vaccine became available to us. We were hearing that what made this particular strain of flu dangerous was that it was new to humans, like the virus that caused the Spanish-flu epidemic of 1918 in which more than 50 million people died. But then we were also hearing that the vaccine had been produced hurriedly and that it might not have been fully tested.

One mother told us that she had miscarried while she was sick with the seasonal flu and, being wary of any flu now, she planned to vaccinate. Another mother said that her child had screamed frighteningly all night following her first vaccination and she would not risk another vaccination of any kind. Every exchange about the new flu vaccine was an extension of the already existing discussion about immunization, in which all that is known of disease is weighed against all that is unknown about vaccines.

As the virus spread, a mother I knew in Florida reported that her entire family had just had the H1N1 flu and it was not any worse than a bad cold. Another mother in Chicago told me that her friend’s healthy nineteen-year-old son had suffered a stroke after being hospitalized with the flu. I believed both of these stories, but they told me nothing more than what the CDC already seemed to be trying to tell me—the flu could be harmless in some cases and serious in others. Under the circumstances, vaccination began to seem prudent. My baby was just over six months old and I had just returned to work at a large university where the majority of my students would be coughing by the last week of classes.

That fall, the New Yorker ran an article in which Michael Specter noted that influenza is regularly among the top ten causes of death in this country and that even relatively mild pandemics of influenza have killed in the millions. “And, though this H1N1 virus is novel,” he wrote, “the vaccine is not. It was made and tested in exactly the same way that flu vaccines are always made and tested.” Some of the mothers I knew did not like the tone of this article. They found it insulting for the same reason I found it reassuring—it did not acknowledge any good reason for doubt.
On Immunity
An Inoculation
EULA BISS

A powerful examination of what vaccines mean for our children, our communities, and the world by the winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award

On becoming a new mother, Eula Biss addresses a chronic condition of fear—fear of the government, the medical establishment, and what may be in your child’s air, food, mattress, medicine, and vaccines. As she researches these questions and examines her own anxieties, she finds that you cannot immunize your child, or yourself, from the world.

In this bold, fascinating book, Biss—author of Notes from No Man’s Land—investigates the metaphors and myths surrounding our conception of immunity and its implications for the individual and the social body. She extends a conversation with other mothers to meditations on the myth of Achilles, Voltaire’s Candide, Bram Stoker’s Dracula, Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring, Susan Sontag’s AIDS and Its Metaphors, and beyond.

On Immunity is a moving account of how we are all interconnected—our bodies and our fates.

Praise for Notes from No Man’s Land

“The most accomplished book of essays anyone has written or published so far in the twenty-first century.”
—Salon

“Biss’s pairings of ideas, like those of most original thinkers, have the knack of seeming brilliant and obvious at the same time. . . . Forceful, beautiful essays.”
—Lizzie Skurnick, NPR

“[Biss] has an astonishing way of seeing connections that may elude most of us. . . . [She] is telling us the story of our country—one we never saw coming.”
—Chicago Tribune

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September
978-1-55597-689-7
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Brit., trans., 1st ser., audio, dram.: Frances Goldin Literary Agency

ALSO AVAILABLE
Notes from No Man’s Land, Essays, Paperback (978-1-55597-518-0), $15.00

EULA BISS is the author of Notes from No Man’s Land, winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award for criticism, and The Balloonists. Her essays have appeared in the Believer and Harper’s. She teaches at Northwestern University and lives in Chicago.
“Utterly compelling. . . . Davis writes with a stunning brilliance, creating fractured worlds that are both extraordinary and routine.”
—The Boston Globe

A New York Times Notable Book of the Year

 “[I fell] in love with Davis’s writing. . . . I’m grateful for every word. . . . When you are lost in the uncanny woods of this astonishing, double-hinged book, just keep reading, and remember to look up. Kathryn Davis knows right where you are.” —Lynda Barry, The New York Times Book Review

“Reading this book is a blast. . . . Duplex is a traditional love story tucked inside an adult fairy tale, wrapped in science fiction. . . . Thankfully, the laws of quantum mechanics do not power Duplex’s magnetism. Instead, it is Davis’s beautiful prose, her psychological awareness.”
—NPR, All Things Considered

—Harper’s Magazine

“Enchanting. . . . Hums beautifully to its own rhythm. It’s a series of dreamlike, often erotic, images and interconnected plot lines that . . . swell to create an intoxicating atmosphere.”
—Slate

“Davis exploits the no-man’s land between the strange-but-real and the truly bizarre in sentences and paragraphs so striking they deserve to be memorized.”
—San Francisco Chronicle
See You in Paradise

Stories

J. ROBERT LENNON

The first substantial collection of short fiction from “a writer with enough electricity to light up the country” (Ann Patchett)

“I guess the things that scare you are the things that are almost normal,” observes one narrator in this collection of effervescent and often uncanny stories. Drawing on fifteen years of work, See You in Paradise is the fullest expression yet of J. Robert Lennon’s distinctive and brilliantly comic take on the pathos and surreality at the heart of American life.

In Lennon’s America, a portal to another universe in a suburban backyard makes for a perfect family outing, and old pals return from the dead to steal your girlfriend. Sexual dysfunction, suicide, tragic accidents, and career stagnation all create surprising opportunities for unexpected grace in this full-hearted and mischievous depiction of those days (weeks, months, years) we all have when things just don’t go quite right.

Praise for Familiar

“As tightly wound as a great Alfred Hitchcock movie. . . . Lennon has executed a literary puzzle, a marvelous trick of the mind.” —Los Angeles Times

“This is an important book, one that reflects the 21st-century human’s fragmentary condition in both content and form, told in a manner so thrilling that it achieves an almost magical propulsion. It’s very funny, too.” —The Boston Globe

“A similar approach. . . has also been explored in novels such as Haruki Murakami’s IQ84 or Tom McCarthy’s Remainder, neither of which achieves the unsettling mastery of Lennon’s far shorter and infinitely superior novel.” —The Irish Times

J. ROBERT LENNON is the author of seven novels, including Familiar, Castle, and Mailman, and a story collection, Pieces for the Left Hand. His fiction has appeared in the Paris Review, Granta, Harper’s, Playboy, and the New Yorker. He lives in Ithaca, New York, where he teaches writing at Cornell University.
In 2011, EUGEN RUGE came to international acclaim when he won the German Book Prize for In Times of Fading Light, his debut novel, which went on to be translated into more than twenty languages.

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the fall of the Wall, the paperback edition of the internationally best-selling portrait of an East German family

“In Ruge’s novel is a pulsing, vibrant, thrillingly alive work, full of formal inventiveness, remarkable empathy, and, above all, mordant and insightful wit. . . . You can see that from the ruins of the former Eastern bloc something has emerged with the power to survive and outlast the world from which it came: the art represented by Mr. Ruge’s book, which has torn down the wall between Russian epic and the Great American Novel.”

—The New York Times

“An important, highly accomplished debut novel. . . . [In Times of Fading Light] is aptly named, for the reading feels as if we are working our way through a photograph album—vignettes about various members of this family—as the light in their lives grows dimmer. . . . To write the history of a country through the prism of a family is an enormous task, but Ruge has cut it up and somehow put the pieces together in a way that at first may seem confusing but later makes perfect sense. . . . This splendid, beautifully translated novel becomes richer as it acquires a logic of its own.”

—The Boston Globe

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—San Francisco Chronicle

“A shrewd and very knowing novel, slippery with the truth and packed tight with compressed tension.”

—Star Tribune (Minneapolis)
Tumbledown
A Novel
ROBERT BOSWELL

“A winning ensemble cast of therapists and patients make stabs at sanity in Robert Boswell’s mordantly funny novel Tumbledown.”
—Vanity Fair

“Like a funnier One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest, this story focuses on a therapist and his wild yet well-meaning patients, bumbling through life, trying to make sense of the world and one another.”

“Boswell can write the most refreshingly old-fashioned kind of narrative: one that evokes deep sympathy for all its characters. . . . All the novel’s characters know that in adulthood they’re supposed to settle for ‘what could pass for a normal life. Maybe it was a C- sort of life, but that was a passing grade.’ Still, they want to keep hope, wonder and love in their lives.”
—The New York Times Book Review

“A complicated, nuanced look at human experience and the insights into that experience contributed by people of varying kinds of intelligence.”
—The Washington Post

“A deft twining of irony and insight on nearly every page. . . . Tumbledown wryly mines the heartache in emotional disturbances, some present from birth and the rest brought on by the business of living.”
—The New York Times

“Within a suspenseful plot spiked with love triangles and flashbacks, Boswell renders each complex psyche and scene with magnificent precision and penetrating vision, fine-tuning our definitions of disorder and healing and deepening our perception of what it is to be normal, what it is to be human.”
—Booklist, starred review

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The Half-Known World, Literary Criticism, Paperback
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ROBERT BOSWELL is the author of eleven books, including The Heyday of the Insensitive Bastards. He shares the Cullen Chair in Creative Writing at the University of Houston with his wife, Antonya Nelson. They live in Houston, Telluride, and Las Cruces.
Blood Lyrics
Poems
KATIE FORD

“Katie Ford’s is a finely wrought lyrical beauty, a poetry of detail and care, but she has set it within an epic arc.”
—Poetry

In Katie Ford’s third collection, she sets her music into lyrics wrung from the world’s dangers. *Blood Lyrics* is a mother’s song, one seared with the knowledge that her country wages long, aching wars in which not all lives are equal. There is beauty imparted too, but it arrives at a cost: “Don’t say it’s the beautiful / I praise,” Ford writes. “I praise the human, / gutted and rising.”

I lie still, play dead, am delivered decree: our daughter weighs seven hundred dimes, paperclips, teaspoons of sugar, this child of grams for which the good nurse laid out her studies as a coin purse into which our tiny wealth clinked, our daughter spilling almost to the floor.

—from “Of a Child Early Born”

Praise for *Blood Lyrics*

“Ford possesses a subtle brilliance; her poems move slantwise, piercing to the heart of whatever matter is under her pen. In this case, that’s the strangeness and fear that accompanies a trying new motherhood. Her work is unsung, and it’s time people start singing about it.”

—Craig Morgan Teicher, NPR
**Citizen**

*An American Lyric*

CLAUDIA RANKINE

*A provocative meditation on race, Claudia Rankine’s long-awaited follow-up to her groundbreaking book Don’t Let Me Be Lonely: An American Lyric*

Claudia Rankine’s bold new book recounts mounting racial aggressions in ongoing encounters in twenty-first-century daily life and in the media. Some of these encounters are slights, seemingly slips of the tongue, and some are intentional offensives in the classroom, at the supermarket, at home, on the tennis court with Serena Williams and the soccer field with Zinedine Zidane, online, on TV—everywhere, all the time. The accumulative stresses come to bear on a person’s ability to speak, perform, and stay alive. Our addressability is tied to the state of our belonging, Rankine argues, as are our assumptions and expectations of citizenship. In essay, image, and poetry, *Citizen* is a powerful testament to the individual and collective effects of racism in our contemporary, often named “post-race” society.

“Rankine’s brilliant, terse, and parabolic prose poems have a shock value rarely found in poetry. . . . *Citizen* is an unforgettable book.”

—Marjorie Perloff

**Praise for Don’t Let Me Be Lonely**

“[Rankine] has made of her savage and stern intelligence, her ruthlessness and her terror, great art. She has made poetry an astonishment again. All of us who write are most profoundly in her debt, as all who read will be in her power.”

—Louise Glück, American Poet
Jim Moore’s first career retrospective shows a poet whittling down experience to its essential confrontation with one’s own limitations, whether it be time running short, or understanding running thin, or capacity running low to think or feel or love enough. *Underground* gathers the best poems from across Moore’s seven previous books and includes twenty new poems. This is the definitive volume by a poet of great depth and generosity.

“It’s coming so fast,”
says an old woman across from me,
speaking to no one in particular:
she nods her head in agreement with herself
and strictly speaking
who can argue with her?

—from “Underground”

**Praise for Jim Moore**

“Jim Moore’s poems are an artful amalgam of humor and fierce attention, suffused by a passion for ancient Asian poetry. Like his sage poet-teachers he grasps the quiet power of white space, knowing that what is unsaid is often just as crucial as what is.”

—*The New York Times*

“I have loved Jim Moore’s brief ‘invisible strings’ since I first stumbled into a few in a magazine. They are chips of reality, obsidian flakes of the heart and mind.”

—Jane Hirshfield, *Ploughshares*
Twenty Poems That Could Save America and Other Essays

TONY HOAGLAND

A fearless, wide-ranging book on the state of poetry and American literary culture by Tony Hoagland, author of What Narcissism Means to Me

Twenty Poems That Could Save America presents insightful essays on the craft of poetry and a bold conversation about the role of poetry in contemporary culture. Essays on the “vertigo” effects of new poetry give way to appraisals of Robert Bly, Sharon Olds, and Dean Young. At the heart of this book is an honesty and curiosity about the ways poetry can influence America at both the private and public levels. Tony Hoagland is already one of this country’s most provocative poets, and this book confirms his role as a restless and perceptive literary and cultural critic.

Live American poetry is absent from our public schools. The teaching of poetry languishes, and that region of youthful neurological terrain capable of being ignited only by poetry is largely dark, unpopulated, and silent, like a classroom whose shades are drawn. This is more than a shame, for poetry is our common treasure-house, and we need its vitality, its respect for the subconscious, its willingness to entertain ambiguity, its plaintive truth-telling, and its imaginative exhibitions of linguistic freedom, which confront the general culture’s more grotesque manipulations.

—from “Twenty Poems That Could Save America”

Praise for Tony Hoagland

“Few [poets] deliver more pure pleasure. [Hoagland’s] erudite comic poems are backloaded with heartache and longing, and they function, emotionally, like improvised explosive devices.


Tony Hoagland is the author of four poetry collections, including What Narcissism Means to Me, and a previous collection of essays, Real Sofistikashun: Essays on Poetry and Craft. He teaches at the University of Houston.
Repast
*Tea, Lunch, and Cocktails*

**D. A. Powell’s first three groundbreaking books**

For the first time published together, D. A. Powell’s landmark trilogy of *Tea, Lunch, and Cocktails* make up a three-course *Divine Comedy* for our day. With a new introduction by novelist David Leavitt, *Repast* presents a major achievement in contemporary poetry.

“No accessible poet of his generation is half as original, and no poet as original is this accessible. With his open-secret sexiness, his confident collage effects, and his grave subjects, Powell could reach far beyond the segmented audiences most poets now expect: poems like his can open up new fields, where fascinated readers might roam or graze.”


D. A. Powell is the author of five collections of poetry, including *Useless Landscape, or A Guide for Boys*, winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award, and *Chronic*, winner of the Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award. He lives in San Francisco.
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