A Lucky Man

Stories

Jamel Brinkley

“This is the rare debut that introduces not a promising talent but a major writer, fully formed.” —Garth Greenwell

In the nine expansive, searching stories of A Lucky Man, fathers and sons attempt to salvage relationships with friends and family members and confront mistakes made in the past. An imaginative young boy from the Bronx goes swimming with his group from day camp at a backyard pool in the suburbs, and faces the effects of power and privilege in ways he can barely grasp. A teen intent on proving himself a man through the all-night revel of J’ouvert can’t help but look out for his impressionable younger brother. A pair of college boys on the prowl follow two girls home from a party and have to own the uncomfortable truth of their desires. And at a capoeira conference, two brothers grapple with how to tell the story of their family, caught in the dance of their painful, fractured history.

Jamel Brinkley’s stories, in a debut that announces the arrival of a significant new voice, reflect the tenderness and vulnerability of black men and boys whose hopes sometimes betray them, especially in a world shaped by race, gender, and class—where luck may be the greatest fiction of all.

PRAISE

“There’s true magic in Jamel Brinkley’s stories . . . By using all his formidable talents, he’s shown us a vision of ourselves.” —Victor LaValle

“I loved this book. From sentence to sentence, these stories are beautifully written, and they are wonderfully moving and smart . . . Jamel Brinkley writes like an angel.” —Charles Baxter

"In vibrant yet restrained prose, Brinkley illuminates the longing for home, which lurks in all of us. A magnificent debut."—Laila Lalami

"These stories do not shy away from heartbreak and brutal consequences. . . . An unforgettable collection by an important new voice."—Danielle Evans

Jamel Brinkley’s stories have appeared in A Public Space, Gulf Coast, and elsewhere. He is a graduate of the Iowa Writers’ Workshop and has been a Wisconsin Institute for Creative Writing Fellow. He lives in Los Angeles.
The Last Englishmen

Love, War, and the End of Empire

Deborah Baker

A sumptuous biographical saga, both intimate and epic, about the waning of the British Empire in India

John Auden was a pioneering geologist of the Himalayas. Michael Spender was the first to survey the northern approach to the summit of Mount Everest. While their younger brothers—W. H. Auden and Stephen Spender—achieved literary fame, they vied to be included on an expedition that would deliver Everest’s summit to an Englishman, a quest that had become a metaphor for Britain’s struggle to maintain power over India. To this rivalry was added another: in the summer of 1938 both men fell in love with a painter named Nancy Sharp. Her choice would determine where each man’s wartime loyalties would lie.

Set in Calcutta, London, the glacier-locked wilds of the Karakoram, and on Everest itself, The Last Englishmen is also the story of a generation. The cast of this exhilarating drama includes Indian and English writers and artists, explorers and Communist spies, Die Hards and Indian nationalists, political rogues and police informers. Key among them is a highborn Bengali poet named Sudhin Datta, a melancholy soul torn, like many of his generation, between hatred of the British Empire and a deep love of European literature, whose life would be upended by the arrival of war on his Calcutta doorstep.

Dense with romance and intrigue, and of startling relevance for the great power games of our own day, Deborah Baker’s The Last Englishmen is an engrossing story that traces the end of empire and the stirring of a new world order.

PRAISE

Praise for The Convert

“The most brilliant and moving book written about Islam and the West since 9/11.” —Ahmed Rashid


“As absorbing as an excellent detective story.” —The Plain Dealer (Cleveland)

Deborah Baker is the author of Making a Farm; In Extremis, which was short-listed for the Pulitzer Prize for Biography; A Blue Hand; and The Convert, which was a finalist for the National Book Award. She lives in India and New York.
Mirror, Shoulder, Signal
A Novel
Dorthe Nors

A smart, witty novel of driving lessons and vertigo, a finalist for the Man Booker International Prize

Sonja is ready to get on with her life. She’s over forty now, and the Swedish crime novels she translates are losing their fascination. She sees a masseuse, tries to reconnect with her sister, and is finally learning to drive. But under the overbearing gaze of her driving instructor, Sonja is unable to shift gears for herself. And her vertigo, which she has always carefully hidden, has begun to manifest at the worst possible moments.

Sonja hoped her move to Copenhagen years ago would have left rural Jutland in the rearview mirror. Yet she keeps remembering the dramatic landscapes of her childhood—the endless sky, the whooper swans, the rye fields—and longs to go back. But how can she return to a place that she no longer recognizes? And how can she escape the alienating streets of Copenhagen?

In Mirror, Shoulder, Signal, Dorthe Nors brings her distinctive blend of style, humor, and insight to a poignant journey of one woman in search of herself when there’s no one to ask for directions.

PRAISE

“Sonja is a thoroughly modern heroine—middle-aged, single, chronically alone, struggling to shift the gears of her entire life . . . Comical, clever, with a knife-twist of uneasiness.” —The Times (London)

“Trenchant and empathetic . . . Nors’s reinvention of experimental fiction is so marvellous.” —The Guardian (UK)

Dorthe Nors is the author of two novellas, So Much for That Winter; a story collection, Karate Chop, winner of the Per Olov Enquist Literary Prize; and four novels. Her work has appeared in the New Yorker, Harper’s Magazine, A Public Space, Tin House, and elsewhere. She lives in Denmark.
This Mournable Body

A Novel

Tsitsi Dangarembga

A searing novel about the obstacles facing women in Zimbabwe, by one of the country’s most notable authors

Anxious about her prospects after leaving a stagnant job, Tambudzai finds herself living in a run-down youth hostel in downtown Harare. For reasons that include her grim financial prospects and her age, she moves to a widow’s boarding house and eventually finds work as a biology teacher. But at every turn in her attempt to make a life for herself, she is faced with a fresh humiliation, until the painful contrast between the future she imagined and her daily reality ultimately drives her to a breaking point.

In This Mournable Body, Tsitsi Dangarembga returns to the protagonist of her acclaimed first novel, Nervous Conditions, to examine how the hope and potential of a young girl and a fledgling nation can sour over time and become a bitter and floundering struggle for survival. As a last resort, Tambudzai takes an ecotourism job that forces her to return to her parents’ impoverished homestead. This homecoming, in Dangarembga’s tense and psychologically charged novel, culminates in an act of betrayal, revealing just how toxic the combination of colonialism and capitalism can be.

PRAISE

Praise for Nervous Conditions

“This is the novel we have been waiting for. . . . It will become a classic.” —Doris Lessing

Tsitsi Dangarembga is the author of two previous novels, including Nervous Conditions, winner of the Commonwealth Writers’ Prize. She is also the director of the Institute of Creative Arts for Progress in Africa Trust. She lives in Harare, Zimbabwe.
Nevada Days

A Novel

Bernardo Atxaga

A seductive, unclassifiable blend of autobiography and fiction set in Reno, from the preeminent Basque author

Nine months as a writer in residence can prove unnerving for anyone. For Bernardo Atxaga, newly arrived with his wife and two daughters, research at the Center for Basque Studies in Reno, Nevada, is anything but straightforward. The neon lights and harsh, windswept desert appear full of ominous signs: A raccoon that watches the house at night, eyes glowing. A series of sexual assaults on campus by an unknown assailant. A spider scuttling endlessly in a glass jar kept by a colleague. And the kidnapping and murder of a young college girl in the house next door.

Fragments of the Basque diaspora appear everywhere: A photo of the heavyweight boxer Paulino Uzcudun, who fought Max Baer in the 1930s. The funeral of a Basque sheepherder. Daily life also turns up some unusual characters—a university friend suspected of involvement in the assaults on campus, a neighbor who takes Atxaga for long drives in the desert, and cowboys at a Tex-Mex joint.

Nevada Days, told in a series of diary-like entries, mixes fragments of the Basque diaspora with a constellation of lively incidents in Reno and memories from Atxaga’s childhood. The routines of everyday life are the only way to resolve the deep wounds of history and relationships, however fleeting or enduring. Trapped in the deeply alien landscape of Nevada, Atxaga weaves together past and present to see the American West from a refreshing, if also ominous and unsettling, vantage.

PRAISE

"Nevada Days is a remarkable book, both for its breadth of landscape and history and for its depth of feeling. Atxaga wanders across time and between continents, all the while still orbiting around the book's central, haunting preoccupations of isolation and violence. Through Atxaga's vision of the American West, we are given access to elusive, unromantic truths about our own country that only this gifted outsider's eye can catch."—Gabriel Urza, author of All That Followed

Bernardo Atxaga is a prizewinning author whose books, including Seven Houses in France and The Accordionist's Son, have won international critical acclaim. His works have been translated into thirty-two languages. He lives in the Basque Country.
My heroes are the ones who don’t say much.  
They don’t hug people they just met.  
They don’t play louder when confused.  
They use plain language even when they listen.

Wisdom doesn’t come to every Californian.  
Chances are I too  
will die with difficulty in the dark.

If you want to see a lost civilization,  
why not look in the mirror?  
If you want to talk about love, why not begin  
with those marigolds you forgot to water?

—from “Real Estate”

Tony Hoagland’s poems interrogate human nature and contemporary culture with an intimate and wild urgency, located somewhere between outrage, stand-up comedy, and grief. His new poems are no less observant of the human and the worldly, no less skeptical, and no less amusing, but they have drifted toward the greater depths of open emotion. Over six collections, Hoagland’s poetry has gotten bigger, more tender, and more encompassing. The poems in Priest Turned Therapist Treats Fear of God turn his clear-eyed vision toward the hidden spaces—and spaciousness—in the human predicament.
Still Life with Two Dead Peacocks and a Girl

Poems

Diane Seuss

Diane Seuss’s brilliant follow-up to Four-Legged Girl, a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry

Still life with stack of bills phone cord cig butt and freezer-burned Dreamsicle
Still life with Easter Bunny twenty caged minks and rusty meat grinder
Still life with whiskey wooden leg two potpies and a dead parakeet
Still life with pork rinds pickled peppers and the Book of Revelation
Still life with feeding tube oxygen half-eaten raspberry Zinger
Still life with convenience store pecking order shotgun blast to the face

—from “American Still Lifes”

Still Life with Two Dead Peacocks and a Girl takes its title from Rembrandt’s painting, a dark emblem of femininity, violence, and the viewer’s own troubled gaze. In Diane Seuss’s new collection, the notion of the still life is shattered and Rembrandt’s painting is presented across the book in pieces—details that hide more than they reveal until they’re assembled into a whole. With invention and irreverence, these poems escape gilded frames and overturn traditional representations of gender, class, and luxury. Instead, Seuss invites in the alienated, the washed-up, the ugly, and the freakish—the overlooked many of us who might more often stand in a Walmart parking lot than before the canvases of O’Keeffe, Pollock, and Rothko. Rendered with precision and profound empathy, this extraordinary gallery of lives in shards shows us that “our memories are local, acute, and unrelenting.”

PRAISE

Praise for Four-Legged Girl

“A richly improvisational poetry collection that leads readers through a gallery of incisive and beguiling portraits and landscapes.” —Pulitzer Prize finalist citation

“Seuss’s fevered lines get under your skin until reading becomes a visceral experience.” —San Francisco Chronicle

Diane Seuss is the author of three previous poetry collections, including Four-Legged Girl, a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, and Wolf Lake, White Gown Blown Open, winner of the Juniper Prize. She lives in Michigan.
New Poets of Native Nations

Edited by Heid E. Erdrich

A landmark anthology celebrating twenty-one Native poets first published in the twenty-first century

New Poets of Native Nations gathers poets of diverse ages, styles, languages, and tribal affiliations to present the extraordinary range and power of new Native poetry. Heid E. Erdrich has selected twenty-one poets whose first books were published after the year 2000 to highlight the exciting works coming up after Joy Harjo and Sherman Alexie. Collected here are poems of great breadth—long narratives, political outcries, experimental works, and traditional lyrics—and the result is an essential anthology of some of the best poets writing now.


PRAISE

As an editor and judge on panels for literary prizes, I have found among my peer poets and critics a general lack of understanding of what Native American writing looks like, what it might be about, what styles it might choose, and how it can be recognized within the whole of American poetry. It has seemed to me that, unless poetry conforms to some stereotypical notion of Native American history and culture in the past tense or unless it depicts a spiritual relationship to the natural world of animals and plants and landscape, it goes unrecognized. We do and we do not write of treaties, battles, and drums. We do and we do not write about eagl...

Heid E. Erdrich is the author of five collections of poetry, including Curator of Ephemera at the New Museum for Archaic Media. She is Ojibwe enrolled at Turtle Mountain, and lives and teaches in Minneapolis.
If You Have to Go

Poems

Katie Ford

The transformative new book from “one of the most important American poets at work today” (Dunya Mikhail)

I am content because before me looms the hope of love.
I do not have it; I do not yet have it.

It is a bird strong enough to lead me by the rope it bites;
unless I pull, it is strong enough for me.

I do worry the end of my days might come
and I will not yet have it. But even then I will be brave

upon my deathbed, and why shouldn’t I be?
I held things here, and I felt them.

—From “Psalm 40”

The poems in Katie Ford’s fourth collection implore their audience—the divine and the human—for attention, for revelation, and, perhaps above all, for companionship. The extraordinary sequence at the heart of this book taps into the radical power of the sonnet form, bending it into a kind of metaphysical and psychological outcry. Beginning in the cramped space of selfhood—in the bedroom, cluttered with doubts, and in the throes of marital loss—these poems edge toward the clarity of “what I can know and admit to knowing.” In song and in silence, Ford inhabits the rooms of anguish and redemption with scouring exactness. This is poetry that “can break open, // it can break your life, it will break you // until you remain.” If You Have to Go is Ford’s most luminous and moving collection.

PRAISE

"This book is astonishing, a formal miracle that rhymes and meter then breaks the rhymes and meters in such perfectly and imperfectly perfect ways. I am in awe."—Sherman Alexie

Katie Ford is the author of three previous poetry collections: Blood Lyrics, Colosseum, and Deposition. The recipient of a Lannan Literary Fellowship and the Levis Reading Prize, she teaches at the University of California, Riverside.
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