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By The Paris Review August 23, 2019

THIS WEEK'S READING

KATE ZAMBRENO. PHOTO: TOM HINES.

When I was very, very young and very, very unhappy working in a bookstore, I read on my lunch breaks Kate Zambreno's *Green Girl*, a novel about another very unhappy shopgirl, and felt as though I understood it on a cellular level. Zambreno's books have a way of getting under your skin, and her willingness to write ugly, to approach the banal and the cliché as just another tool and subvert it into works of rage and oftentimes real beauty, is part of the appeal. *Screen Tests*, her latest, pairs a first half composed of very short, very funny pieces of fiction (some of which were published in [the Spring 2019 issue](#)) with a second half of longer essays, and the effect is that of a particularly devastating form of déjà vu. Sentences repeat themselves; nameless characters are named; consequences are experienced. The pernicious effects of class, money, and gender reoccur. Is there a way to break the cycle? Art seems like part of the answer—and in an era in which it feels as though we all constantly need to market ourselves, it's refreshing to read a book that explicitly champions art that is raw, art that is messy, art that cannot be contained. —**Rhian Sasseen**

My physics is fuzzy, but I've been musing on how three points can make for the most stable seat and the least stable relationships. Almost before I knew it, Joanna Hogg's most recent film, *The Souvenir*, became a favorite. There was an issue of *The New Yorker* lying around the office already opened to [Rebecca Mead's nimble profile of Hogg](#). Mead told me what I needed to know: Hogg had reread Henry James's *A Portrait of a Lady* while making the film; it is deeply, devotedly autobiographical, but she waited nearly thirty years to make it; and Tilda Swinton appears. *The Souvenir*, [playing now at Metrograph](#), is fabulously good and exceptionally more than the sum of its parts. Julie, an untried soul from a privileged family, is making her first forays into film but hardly knows the language, much less her own particular accent. She meets and falls for an older man who brings an aesthetic vernacular and a heroin addiction to her waiting canvas. Even on the Lower East Side, where hip insouciance is as thick as the heat, the film elicited gasps and sobs from the small group of us in the theater. It's unlike any movie I've seen before, and Hogg's sureness in telling the story of her own innocence couldn't be more welcome. A patina of luxurious tradition makes the film timeless even as it is so specific to the early eighties—the opera in Venice, champagne at lunch, a family walking their own field at dusk. Aside from everything else, *The Souvenir* is a love story that feels untold even though it is as old as time: a threesome, two lovers and a third point—here an addiction—that leaves a hole in the universe as it implodes. —**Julia Berick**

Jesse Ball's latest novel, *The Divers' Game*, is a book that contemplates, with the gravity and grace it deserves, a world beyond the point of no return. In three stunning and largely separate sections, Ball depicts a world very similar to our own—harshly stratified, on the brink of ecological collapse, in which the lives of that majority on the margin are considered less than worthless. Ball provides us with sparsely drawn characters, all of whom hold the lives of others in their hands. Whether a zookeeper tasked with caring for the world's only living hare, a young girl granted absolute sovereignty for the day, or simply children whose bullying has gone too far, these characters live in a world “maintained by a violence so complete, it is like air.” The book's final section, in which a woman confronts the violence within herself, is one of the more beautiful things I've ever read. It is very hard to think, let alone to write, about the world in which we live. To attempt to capture all that is happening, all that we are letting happen, can often feel like a never-ending failure: “I want to say something. I sit to write it. I fail to say it. I fail to say it. I fail to say it. I fail to say it.” Ball says it, thank God. We can only hope it's not too late. —**Noor Qasim**

Even if you like jazz, you still might not like Sam Ospovat's new album, *Ride Angles*. But if you like challenging, angular, rhythmically inventive jazz with a decidedly contemporary edginess, you may indeed love it—I do, not in spite but because of the challenges it offers. Ospovat is a New York-based drummer (who, it also happens, is among the musicians scoring the second season of *the Paris Review podcast*, though don't expect music like this there) with interests ranging from twentieth-century classical music to avant-garde jazz. Among his collaborators on this record is the pianist Matt Mitchell, one of the most exciting and responsive improvisers currently working (his recent album *Phalanx Ambassadors* is also not to be missed). If you give *Ride Angles* a spin, you'll find yourself chasing choppy melodies through all sorts of rhythmic gauntlets; there's a sprinkle of Cecil Taylor here and there, though without any of Taylor's aggression and general overwhelm. Everywhere there is something interesting to pay attention to—from the bickering among the drums, piano, guitar, and sax to, on one tune, odd and glorious vocals from Lorin Benedict. I suppose music like this is an acquired taste, but if you've already acquired it, or would like to, this album will make you very happy. —**Craig Morgan Teicher**

The Yale University Art Gallery's current student-curated exhibition, “*A Nation Reflected: Stories in American Glass*,” traces America's cultural history by focusing on a single medium. Paradoxically, the show's simple conceit makes its appeal difficult to describe succinctly, but its success is no doubt born of how its broad parameters create the space for a narrative arc. Eighteenth-century glass flasks commemorating Masonic societies or depicting George Washington are placed alongside Native American beaded jewelry, marking the tensions of nascent America. Glassware sets, elegant mirrors, and iconic, elaborate Tiffany lamps represent the early twentieth century's unapologetic excess, and the use of glass in scientific instruments displays our own contemporary aesthetic. The broad scope of the show allows for both Horatian virtues, beauty and utility, to be presented as entirely separate—such as in contemporary works of sculpture alongside a sleek, functional Chemex coffee maker—and as interwoven—such as in a nineteenth-century table with a mirror installed below it, meant to be placed opposite a window to maximize the light in a dingy, pre-electricity room. Perhaps the most thoughtful absence is in the voice of the curators: there is very little editorializing beyond choices in the layout of objects; the nation one sees reflected depends entirely on the viewer. —**Lauren Kane**



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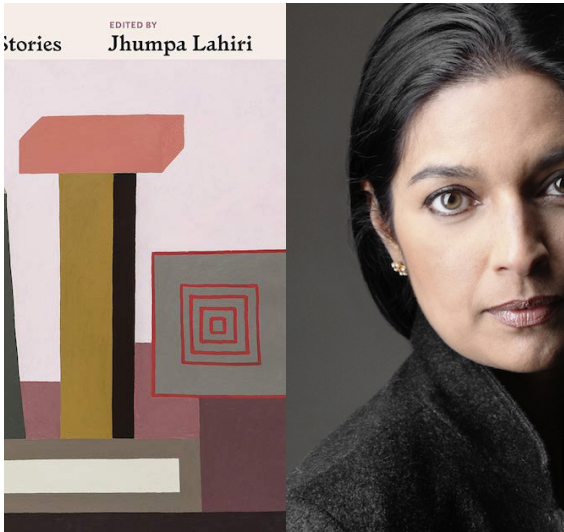
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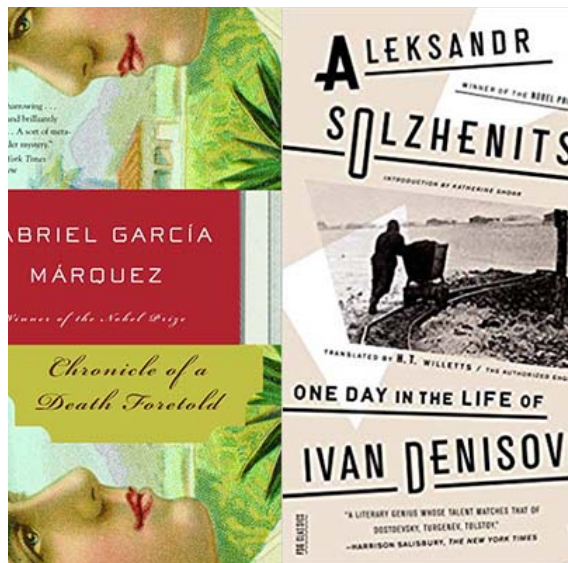
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