

Best Books 2022

consequences of political and religious extremism.

Animal Joy: A Book of Laughter and Resuscitation

Nuar Alsadir (Graywolf)

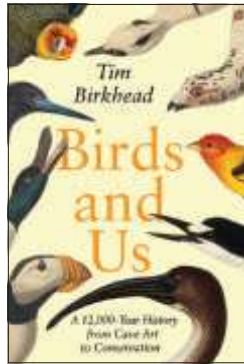
A psychoanalyst goes to clown school in this razor-sharp blend of personal essay and criticism. Alsadir considers how laughter allows one to express their true self, how humor relates to power, and how, as her instructor told the class, “Crying is just laughing larger,” making for a one-of-a-kind outing.

Between Us: How Cultures Create Emotions

Batja Mesquita (Norton)

Weaving together insights from anthropology, sociology, and psychology, social psychologist Mesquita makes the novel

case that emotions arise from social context. The astute analysis enthralls and the case studies on cultures from Japan, Madagascar, the U.S., and West Sumatra fascinate as they upend conventional wisdom and cast a new light on a fundamental part of the human condition.



Birds and Us: A 12,000-Year History from Cave Art to Conservation

Tim Birkhead (Princeton Univ.)

Ornithologist Birkhead's enthusiasm is infectious in this sweeping history of humans' relationship with birds, in which he poignantly suggests that better understanding the

interspecies interplay can benefit humans, birds, and the natural world they both share. It's spectacular.

Butts: A Backstory

Heather Radke (Avid Reader)

An ambitious mash-up of pop culture, science, and history, this breakout debut from *Radiolab* reporter Radke tracks the evolution of attitudes toward women's butts from the “Hottentot Venus” to Miley Cyrus. Along the way, Radke delves into eugenics, hip-hop aesthetics, the physiology of posteriors, and more. It adds up to one of the year's most ingenious and eye-opening cultural studies.

By Hands Now Known: Jim Crow's Legal Executioners

Margaret Burnham (Norton)

Drawing on a database of more than 1,000 racially motivated homicides, Burnham documents with searing exactitude the role that racialized terror played in enforcing Jim Crow. Harrowing case studies, including an elderly woman who was beaten to death by a white storekeeper in 1944, brush up against astute legal analysis and inspiring profiles of the nascent civil rights movement.

Camera Man: Buster Keaton, the Dawn of Cinema, and the Invention of the Twentieth Century

Dana Stevens (Atria)

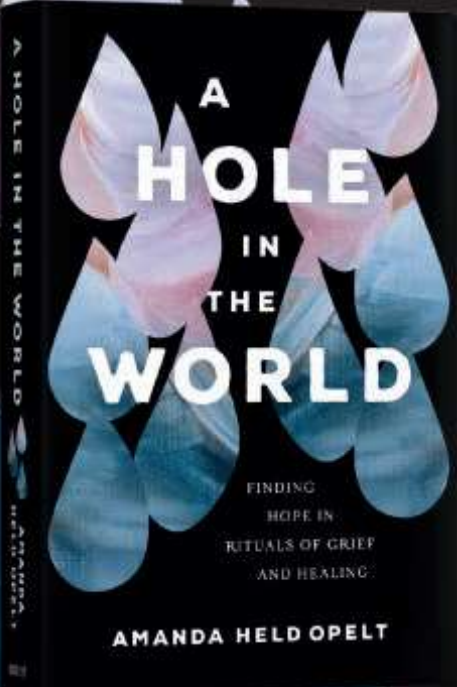
Stevens pulls back the curtain on one of Hollywood's greats in her spellbinding biography of Buster Keaton, who here emerges as a key player in the 20th century. It's fast-paced and exceedingly smart, and, with its mini-portraits of his peers, reveals much about the actor's milieu.

Constructing a Nervous System: A Memoir

Margo Jefferson (Pantheon)

In this moving excavation of Black female identity, Pulitzer Prize-winning critic and memoirist Jefferson examines the Black artists, musicians, and writers who have informed her sense of self and influenced American culture. Through autobiographical fragments and sharp cultural commentary, Jefferson delivers

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—K. J. RAMSEY,
licensed counselor and author

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