

WESTERN MUSIC

JIM OWEN. *Six Guns and Trail Songs.* Jim Owen Music, \$10, jowen34438@aol.com.



I'd had one of the toughest weeks in my life. And when you consider I'm 68, you know that's saying something. I was feeling pretty beat down and disappointed in myself. But leaving home one morning at the end of that miserable week, I put this CD in my car's player. As Jim Owen's version of "Back in the Saddle Again" spilled out, I felt myself shedding the blues like a snake losing old skin.

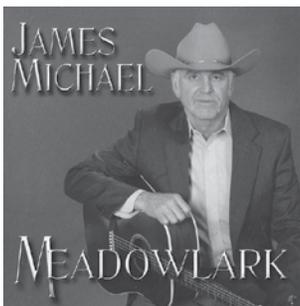
Cowboy songs – especially favorites such as "Ghost Riders in the Sky," "Don't Fence Me In" and "Big Iron," all on this CD – affect me like that when sung by a voice as fine as Owen's. Owen is a superlative writer, too. His stack of country hits includes "Louisiana Woman, Mississippi Man," the classic version of which was performed by Conway Twitty and Loretta Lynn. He penned three of the songs on this record. Of those, my pick is "Pistolero," the story of an old Ranger who tracks down and deals with a nephew gone bad.



OLLIE REED JR.

JAMES MICHAEL. *Meadowlark.* James Michael Music, \$15, mhosea@zianet.com.

Many songs written by James Michael come from his own life. Since he is the working cowboy son of a cowboy father, that makes for Western records that are as authentic as they are pleasing. "All-American Cowboy" and "Store-Bought Buckle" are drawn from his dad's life, the love song "Meadowlark" is about his mom and dad, and "Turn to Die" was inspired by the time a horse fell on Michael. All good stuff. But one of the best cuts here is "Lizzy Knight," a song that tells the true story of a woman who emigrated from England to Colorado in 1875 and worked hard to make a place for herself and her family. I also like "Gaishena," a mystical poem about a girl of long-ago Chaco Canyon. Michael is a man of many talents. But he only wears one hat – and that's cowboy.



E-mail Ollie at oreedjr@gmail.com and send CDs to him at P.O. Box 2381, Corrales, NM 87048.

WESTERN DVDS

McCabe & Mrs. Miller. Criterion. Blu-Ray, \$39.95; DVD, \$29.95, Criterion.com.

Within Westerns, cameramen and directors seemed forever joined by their collaborative visuals, the images they painted, for more than a century, molding the genre into what it is. John Ford's deep-shadowed landscapes, captured by Bert Glennon and, later, William Clothier, are now the stuff of legend. Lucien Ballard's vivid Technicolor palette for Henry Hathaway became naturalistic when he shot for Budd Boetticher and Sam Peckinpah, while Bruce Surtees split the darkness of Clint Eastwood's scenes like the flame of a single candle.



C. COURTNEY JOYNER

In 1970, cinematographer Vilmos Zsigmond traveled to the Pacific Northwest to make, in director Robert Altman's words, a "sort-of-a-western." It was the perfect time for their collaboration. The genre was pumping, energized by the success of *The Wild Bunch* and *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*. But this story of mumbling gambler Warren Beatty, who comes to the dogtrot known as Presbyterian Church, then teams with madam Julie Christie to build it into a bustling town, wasn't going to play out as a usual Western. *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* (1971) was to find its own tone and rhythms in its naturalistic performance, setting and stark violence, as well as in the beating heart of its characters, all captured by Zsigmond's photography which set a new standard for use of color and light in American film.

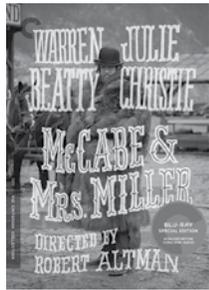
Altman's tale is a study in naturalism, as eccentric as a man of the wilderness and romantic as a lonesome cowboy. The warm, yellow light of Zsigmond's interiors sneaks into rooms through wall slats and dirty windows. Outside, the bitter cold is a cloudless sky, hanging like a shroud over these men and women.

Death comes, as in any Western, but for Altman, a gunfight is just another aspect of this hard life. Keith Carradine's hot-shot meets his maker in slow-motion that's not fanciful, but rather an icy vision created by director and cinematographer that can't be shaken.

McCabe & Mrs. Miller's other glories are many: wonderful supporting performances, Gene Callahan's production design and the brave choice of Leonard Cohen's songs for the soundtrack.

Criterion's Blu-Ray presents this "sort-of-a-western" in its finest form. Ever. The Blu-Ray extras include a new documentary, original location featurette, an interview with Zsigmond, and two episodes of *The Dick Cavett Show*, with Altman and critic Pauline Kael discussing the film's original critical reception.

C. Courtney Joyner writes in many formats, including screenplays, fiction and nonfiction. E-mail him at olcourt@yahoo.com.



JUVENILE

ALICE V. BROCK. *The River of Cattle*. Pen-L. Trade paperback, 225 pages, \$13.97, Pen-L.com.

Will Whitaker and his beloved stallion, Buck, leave their Texas ranch with Will's father, Dan, to join a cattle drive bound for the New Mexico Territory. But 11-year-old Will has to find a way to cope with crushing loss – not only the sale of the family ranch but the death of his mother. Struggling with his anger and grief on the grueling drive, Will also works to prove himself a real cowboy. As the drovers traverse Comanche country, Will faces another challenge when a homeless 12-year-old, Two Feathers, tries to steal Buck. What begins in hatred between the two boys turns ultimately into trust and friendship as they rescue each other from life-threatening dangers. This middle-grade novel paints a vivid picture of hardship, perseverance, and prejudice overcome in the post-Civil War Southwest.

– Nancy Plain

CANDACE FLEMING. *Presenting Buffalo Bill: The Man Who Invented the Wild West*. Roaring Book. Hardcover, 259 pages, \$19.99, us.macmillan.com.

Using sources such as William F. Cody's autobiography as well as respected biographers, Candace Fleming tells Cody's story in a fashion that will appeal to young adults. Occasional interruptions to the text – "Panning for the Truth" – integrate questions about Cody's veracity or cite historical facts substantiating or refuting his claims. Several photographs of Cody, his children and his Wild West show supplement the text. I can see it being the first in a series about remarkable historical characters.

– Sandra K. Sagala

VIRGINIA DRIVING HAWK SNEVE. *Sioux Women: Traditionally*

Sacred. South Dakota Historical Society Press. Trade paperback, 102 pages, \$16.95, SDHSPress.com.

A prolific writer of books for young adults, Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve offers this one based on the untold stories of women in her native culture. She reminds us that values such as those taught by the White Buffalo Calf Woman still hold a place of high honor in the modern world. This book, a product of her study of winter counts (calendar of events, originally painted on animal hides) and oral histories, illustrates the quality of her work for which she has been awarded the National Humanities Medal. As one of the judges said, "She has brought the richness of Native American culture and heritage to thousands."

– Lynn Bueling

NONFICTION

TOM CLAVIN. *Dodge City: Wyatt Earp, Bat Masterson, and the Wickedest Town in the American West*. St. Martin's. Hardcover, 400 pages, \$29.99, us.macmillan.com.

Tom Clavin, a 2014 Spur finalist as co-author (with Bob Drury) of *The Heart of Everything That Is: The Untold Story of Red Cloud, An American Legend*, turns to a lighter, more rollicking story in this entertaining look at two Western icons and one legendary town. Dodge City, Wyatt Earp and Bat Masterson get their due – again – and while Clavin mixes documented history with tales some historians question if not outright discredit, the author keeps readers engaged by telling his story with zest and a great deal of humor.

PETER COZZENS. *The Earth Is Weeping: The Epic Story of the Indian Wars for the American West*. Alfred A. Knopf. Hardcover, 544 pages, \$35, AAKnopf.com.

Peter Cozzens offers a moving history of the conflicts between whites

and American Indians from the 1860s to Wounded Knee in 1890. Yes, this is the story Dee Brown told in the groundbreaking *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (1970), but Cozzens seeks to "bring historical balance to the story of the Indian Wars." Even so, *The Earth Is Weeping* is poignant and disheartening, a well-written, concise treatise of the West's darkest chapter. It might not replace Brown's masterpiece in your hearts, but *The Earth Is Weeping* is among the best-written Western histories of 2016.

DONALD L. CUTLER. *"Hang Them All": George Wright and the Plateau Indian War*. University of Oklahoma Press. Hardcover, 392 pages, \$29.95, OUpres.com.

George Wright, "a hero with a now-unsteady legacy" according to the author, commanded Army troops in Washington and Oregon territories in the late 1850s. His campaign against various tribes on the Columbia Plateau terrorized Indians by hoisting up hostages to strangle, burning villages, destroying food supplies and slaughtering some 700 horses. Donald Cutler details Wright's career before and after his assignment to the Pacific Northwest, including a period of despair over lack of advancement, and examines his legacy in this valuable contribution to the history of our nation's 19th Century Indian policies.

– Rod Miller

MICHAEL R. GRAUER. *Rounded Up in Glory: Frank Reaugh, Texas Renaissance Man*. University of North Texas Press. Hardcover, 403 pages, \$39.95, UNTPress.unt.edu.

Not only does this book present the complexities of artist Frank Reaugh, it offers an overview of art during the period. Born in Illinois, Reaugh grew up in Terrell, Texas, studied at the Saint Louis School of Fine Arts and the Académie Julian in Paris. Striving to be a painter of history, he took

sketching trips across the Southwest, first on horseback and then by Studebaker. You can view the Reaugh pastel and paint collections at the University of Texas in Austin and at the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum in Canyon. The book includes color plates plus an extensive bibliography. This is a fascinating profile of a noteworthy artist who was much more than just a “longhorn painter.”

– Natalie Bright

LLOYD KEITH and JOHN C. JACKSON. *The Fur Trade Gamble: North West Company on the Pacific Slope, 1800-1820.* Washington State University Press. Paperback, 336 pages, \$24.95, WSUPress.wsu.edu.

Books relating to the history and operations of the Rocky Mountain fur trade are common. This well-researched narrative, however, fills a void in the literature of one of the *other* important fur-trade spheres in North America: the vast Pacific Northwest. Here, the authors, now deceased, explore the workings of the North West Company and John Jacob Astor’s Pacific Fur Company, both important regional influences. By introducing the workings of a plethora of characters – Simon Fraser, the McGillivray family, David Thompson, Alexander Mackenzie, Astor, and others, most of whom might be obscure to many readers – Lloyd Keith and John Jackson paint a detailed portrait of the operations of two fiercely competitive companies and their shaping of the North American fur trade.

– James A. Crutchfield

MARGOT LIBERTY. *Horseback Schoolmarm.* University of Oklahoma Press. Hardcover, 123 pages, \$24.95. OUPress.com.

Imagine teaching in the early 1950s in rural Montana. Imagine instead of driving to work on four wheels, riding in on four legs. Margot Liberty, née Pringle, did just that. With a degree bestowed by Cornell University, followed by a six-week education course, Pringle accepted the job of teaching in a one-room schoolhouse. She had seven students ranging from first through seventh grades. How she tackled the process of teaching with what was on hand or could find is a lesson in making learning fun out of scant resources. This is an inspiring read.

– Sandy Whiting

JAMES D. McLAIRD. *Hugh Glass: Grizzly Survivor.* South Dakota Historical Society Press. Trade paperback, 238 pages, \$14.95, SDSHSPress.com.

James McLaird writes that if a grizzly bear had not mauled trapper Hugh Glass, he “would barely warrant a passing note in fur-trade history.” McLaird brings his investigative skills to bear as he uncovers the real Hugh Glass, who was attacked by a grizzly on the prairie of what is now South Dakota. This excellent book examines Glass and the fur trade, the creation of his legend by poet John G. Neihardt (*The Song of Hugh Glass*) and novelist Frederick Manfred (*Lord Grizzly*), and finally the grizzly bear on

Favorite Books

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the plains. This book is for anyone interested in the early fur trade.

– Bill Markley

B. BYRON PRICE (editor). *Picturing Indian Territory: Portraits of the Land That Became Oklahoma, 1819-1907*. University of Oklahoma Press. Hardcover, 147 pages, \$34.95, OUPress.com.

This handsome volume chronicles almost 90 years of visions of Indian Territory. Well-illustrated with insightful essays by James Peck, B. Byron Price and Mark Andrew White, *Picturing Indian Territory* is a wonderful resource for lovers of art and/or Oklahoma history. Includes an introduction by John R. Lovett.

WILLIAM D. STREET (author) and **WARREN R. STREET** (editor). *Twenty-Five Years among the Indians and Buffalo: A Frontier Memoir*. University Press of Kansas. Hardcover, 525 pages, \$29.95, KansasPress.ku.edu.

Kansas frontiersman William D. Street, who died in 1911, chronicles his life on the plains, circa 1861-78, in this memoir that is only now being published, thanks to his great-grandson, who edited the manuscript. Bill Street, who relied on his journals and his career as a newspaper editor to recall his adventures, gives us far too much information. But don't stop reading, because just when you're about to give up he'll entice you with vivid details about battles with lice and buffalo hunts and life as a soldier or a cowboy, along with glimpses of Wild Bill Hickok and Sitting Bull.

KEVIN Z. SWEENEY. *Prelude to the Dust Bowl: Drought in the Nineteenth Century Southern Plains*. University of Oklahoma Press. Hardcover, 192 pages. \$34.96, OUPress.com.

Kevin Sweeney details Major Stephen H. Long's scientific expedition of 1820, a journey from Omaha to Colorado to Texas. The poorly provisioned group met with nothing but privation and drought, leading cartographers to label the region "The Great American Desert" into the 1840s. What Long didn't understand was that drought was

cyclical, at least in the eastern plains, punctuating long periods of adequate rainfall. Sweeney shows the effect of droughts on buffalo migration – and Indian unrest – in the 1840s; an early Republic of Texas attempt to move Comanches to reservations; and the last great land run into the Cherokee Outlet in the drought year of 1893. A fresh, well-written perspective.

– John Mort

PHILLIP THOMAS TUCKER.

Death at the Little Bighorn: A New Look at Custer – His Tactics and the Tragic Decisions Made at the Last Stand. Skyhorse. Hardcover, 464 pages, \$27.99, SkyhorsePublishing.com.

In yet another book about that fateful summer day in Montana in 1876, Phillip Tucker argues that the battle's real turning point came when George Custer charged Medicine Tail Coulee Ford and that the fabled Last Stand on Custer Hill was more or less mop-up work for Cheyennes and Lakotas. Known for rethinking major events and icons in history (Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg, George Washington), Tucker makes some interesting points, but he also relies on sources several historians have debunked. Worse, his massive ego mars the narrative because Tucker writes as though he knows everything and other historians simply got it all wrong. He could also have used a better editor. How many times do we need to read that "Ree" is shorthand for "Arickaree"? A book like this is sure to stir up heated debates, typically the case for anything written about Custer and/or the Little Big Horn.

EDWARD B. WESTERMANN.

Hitler's Ostkrieg and the Indian Wars: Comparing Genocide and Conquest. University of Oklahoma Press. Hardcover, 327 pages, \$34.95, OUPress.com

Adolf Hitler famously likened Nazi justification for invading Poland and Russia with the U.S. claim of "manifest destiny." In a carefully argued and well-documented examination of this comparison, Edward Westermann finds little to justify Hitler's

rationale. Alternating between the Indian Wars and the *Ostkrieg* (Germany's invasion of eastern Europe), Westermann demonstrates that the U.S. motive involved economic expansion and conquering Native resistance. Demands for extermination of Indians were marginal and met by arguments for civilizing the Indians, not killing them. By contrast, Nazis saw Slavs and Jews as subhuman. Acting under Hitler's orders, *einsatzgruppen* (killing squads), accompanied by the Wehrmacht as well as local police, wiped out entire villages and towns. Westermann gives minimal attention to Auschwitz and other death camps, instead focusing on the execution by gunshot of hundreds of thousands of innocent men, women and children. This important book shows that Hitler's claim was a false equivalent. The book is an excellent example of comparative transnational history.

– Abraham Hoffman

FICTION

J.v.L. BELL. *The Lucky Hat Mine*. Hansen. Trade paperback, eBook, 304 pages, \$16, \$7.99, HansenPublishing.com.

Genteel Southern lady Millie Virginia comes to Idaho Springs, Colorado, in 1863 as a mail-order bride. Woe is Millie when she discovers that her intended has died in what appears to be a mining accident but at least has left his mine and home to her. When her late fiancé's brother, the rough and ungentlemanly Dominic Drouillard arrives, the mystery is just beginning. Colorado native J.v.L. Bell provides readers with an entertaining if predictable blend of historical fiction, mystery and romance – plus one really cute goat.

RUSTY DAVIS. *Black Wind Pass*, Five Star Publishing. Hardcover, 242 pages, \$25.95, Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar.

When Rory Carrick arrives home after being gone 10 years – fighting in the Civil War, subsequent survival at Andersonville, then a misunderstanding

leading to murder in Texas – he finds his entire family dead and strangers invading his Wyoming ranch. Haunted by his past, he works to build a future. Unfortunately, surrounding ranchers have other ideas. *Black Wind Pass* sparkles with descriptions of land, obviously a strength of the writer. However, the characters and plot are as predictable as Wyoming snow in winter.

The concept behind Carrick’s war-logged nightmares and the common plot are solid, but it’s too convenient to have two women – one young and single – inhabiting Carrick’s former ranch. You can guess the rest.

– Melody Groves

PATRICK DEAREN. *Dead Man’s Boot*. Five Star. Hardcover, 261 pages, \$25.95, Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar.

A leather pouch, containing gold nuggets and a tattered map fragment, found in a dead man’s boot along the Pecos River, launches this tale layered with cowboys, Comanches, a wandering widow, a rancher, a writer, Apaches, skeletons and a Dark Man. Patrick Dearen does well creating strong characters involved in intricate plots and subplots, and he certainly has a way with words. Readers may get tangled in the chaotic climactic events in the Guadalupe Mountains, and some will find the moralizing a little heavy-handed. But all in all, this is a beautifully written, engaging novel well worth the read.

– Rod Miller

PHYLLIS DE LA GARZA. *Lost Roundup*. Silk Label. Trade paperback. 245 pages, \$17.99, SilkLabelBooks.com.

Phyllis de la Garza writes about strong women in the Old West. In *Lost Roundup*, Azalea Brown has suddenly become a young widow. Immediately she is duped out of her ranch, cattle and horses by a gal who claims to be her husband’s long-lost daughter. Azalea has no money, as her husband gambled it away just before he died. When she discovers ownership papers, she decides to go after her rightful property. But who will ride with her?

The author brings her knowledge of horses, cattle (and cattle drives), weapons and trail cooking to this tale of a young woman’s struggle to stake her claim in a cattleman’s world. A few historical figures make appearances, but the fictional characters totally rock the story.

– Richard Lapidus

WINSTON GROOM. *El Paso*. Liveright. Hardcover, 477 pages, \$27.95, Books.WWNorton.com.

The *Forrest Gump* author returns to fiction after a nearly 20-year hiatus with a rollicking tall tale set on the Texas-Mexico border during the Mexican Revolution. When Pancho Villa’s men “liberate” \$2.5 million dollars worth of cattle from an American-owned ranch in Chihuahua and savagely butcher the foreman, railroad tycoon John Shaughnessy decides to take matters into his own hands, dragging his extended family along for what turns out to be the wild ride of their lives. Kidnapping, mayhem and a daring rescue attempt by newfangled aeroplane all figure into what amounts to an epic extended chase. After an unnecessarily digressive opening few chapters, the author settles into a lively pace and jaunty tone, punctuated by shocking scenes of violence. An eminent historian in his own right, Groom vividly depicts the anarchy of Revolution-era Mexico, and fills his supporting cast with familiar figures. Ambrose Bierce, Tom Mix, John Reed, Henry O. Flipper, “Black Jack” Pershing and a young George Patton all figure prominently in the action, vividly rendered and sometimes to the detriment of the novel’s entirely fictional characters.

– Kirk Ellis

JEFF GUINN. *Silver City: A Novel of the American West*. G.P. Putnam. Hardcover, 400 pages, \$27, PenguinRandomHouse.com.

Noted nonfiction writer Jeff Guinn closes his wonderful Old West trilogy about the adventures of Cash McLendon. This time, McLendon is back in Arizona Territory to woo Gabrielle Tirrito. But trouble strikes

when Killer Boots, the brute working for McLendon’s bitter enemy, tracks down McLendon and kidnaps Tirrito. Guinn keeps the story moving, peppered with historical figures, including a delightfully incompetent Ike Clanton. By the way, Silver City plays a small role in the story (Guinn just liked the name). This is a Western you have to love, and Killer Boots might be the most unnerving Western bad man since Blue Duck in Larry McMurtry’s *Lonesome Dove*.

HARLAN HAGUE. *A Place for Mei Lin*. Five Star. Hardcover, 214 pages, \$25.95, Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar.

At the core of author Harlan Hague’s *A Place for Mei Lin* is a gritty and desperate romance between a struggling prospector and the young woman he fights to save from a life of indentured servitude. Set against the backdrop of Idaho’s Sawtooth Mountains, Hague’s characters battle harsh elements and hostile Indians determined to separate them from their meager mining claim and one another. *A Place for Mei Lin* is a passionate tale that touches the heart deeper than expected.

– Chris Enss

W. HOCK HOCHHEIM. *Last of the Gunmen: A Johann Gunther Adventure*. Lauric. Trade paperback, eBook, 300 pages, \$18.95, LauricPress.com.

After the stock crash of 1907, there is unrest in Fort Worth, Texas, as desperate people try to recover. An outlaw gang robs, mugs and murders men and women. Johann Gunther of Remedies Detective Agency and his partner Jefe are hired to find the killers of a former Louisiana judge and soon become involved in a much larger adventure, including helping a framed police officer find the murderers of his wife and housekeeper. The story is full of suspense and will keep you wondering until the end how everything is tied together.

– Lowell F. Volk

MARK C. JACKSON. *An Eye for an Eye, Book One*. Five Star. Hardcover, 210 pages, \$25.95, Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar.

This swashbuckling, fur-trapping, action-packed tale of retribution and redemption will keep readers on the edge of their seats from start to finish. Set in 1835, Zebadiah Creed reels at his brother's death and vows to hunt down and kill the men responsible. And retrieving his stolen beaver skins would be nice, too. The trail leads Zeb down the Great Mississippi to St. Louis and later to New Orleans, where he discovers bizarre men and women. And although he finds the quarry he has been after, the adventure is nowhere over. While the action certainly keeps the pages turning, the things Zeb encounters (think wolverines, a New Orleans witch and a French guillotine) and the ease with which he meets them, take the reader out of the story. However, this is a rip-snorting, rollicking yarn with never a dull moment.

– Melody Groves

CARLA KELLY. *For This We Are Soldiers.* Sweetwater. Mass-market paperback, 240 pages, \$8.99, CedarFort.com.

Bestselling author Carla Kelly has done it again. She moved me to tears more than once in this collection of short stories and novellas set on Western military installations in the late 1800s. Once a ranger/historian at Fort Laramie, Kelly knows whereof she writes, keeping the Indian Wars authentic, while taking you behind Army lives into the hearts of men and women. I just wished they were all novel length. I wanted more.

– Linda Jacobs

PAUL JOSEPH LEDERER. *In Our Time.* Five Star. Hardcover, 337 pages, \$25.95, Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar.

Paul Lederer knows how to write characters. The three Adair teenagers, full-blood Cherokees living near the 1916 Indian town of Broken Post, want more than their parent's lives. They want better chances at success. The oldest strikes out to Hollywood, wooed by the "flickers," where she finds drugs and jackals. The brother joins the Army only to find himself entrenched

in France and comes home fighting memories. The youngest child stays in town vowing to open a school – and fights racism. Despite holes in the plot and a mesmerizing yet disturbing omniscient point of view, Lederer leads readers down the path these three take as they stumble into adulthood woefully unprepared. This story is supposed to be about Indian struggles. Instead, it's a gripping character study.

– Melody Groves

MATTHEW P. MAYO. *The Outfit: To Hell and Back.* Five Star. Hardcover, 314 pages, \$25.95, Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar.

This tantalizing novel is the first in a whole new series for Matthew Mayo. The hero in this entertaining yarn is Rafe Barr, freed by a corrupt warden from a cell in Yuma prison where he was unjustly imprisoned for a crime he didn't commit. The warden offers a full pardon if Barr can find where the daughter of the governor has been held after being kidnapped. This one will keep you awake at night until you've finished. Let's hope we won't have to wait too long for the next one.

– Phil Dunlap

ROBERT MCKEE. *Killing Blood.* Five Star. Hardcover, 216 pages, \$25.95, Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar.

Brothers Frank and Billy Young are riding the train across the Wyoming prairie when a robbery brings everything to a halt. Cold-blooded killers, the thieves are aiming to kill everyone, leaving no witnesses, when Billy makes his move. He succeeds in killing one thief and thwarting the others, but his brother Frank is dead, along with several others. It's hard to understand the motivation for the murders, and Billy won't rest until the perpetrators are dead. What he doesn't know is that there's more at stake than a simple train robbery gone wrong. This is an exciting Western with lots of action, fine characters, a touch of romance and even some philosophizing. Good stuff.

– Carol Crigger

GINA L. MULLIGAN. *From Across the Room.* Five Star. Hardcover, 271 pages, \$25.95, Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar.

An elegant Victorian tale, told in elegant Victorian prose. A struggling writer of fiction falls head over heels in love with a proper society damsel with the required Victorian dignity and modesty. The story is told through the medium of letters written only by the young author. The lovers, mostly at arms length, are beset by overbearing fathers, agonizing separations and mutual doubt about the other's intentions. But love conquers all. Or does it? The reader is left to read between the lines of the letters, make assumptions, puzzle over insinuations and draw conclusions, even to the final letter. An interesting read, the sort of story that in future will be told only in fiction since the art and practice of letter-writing died with the introduction of e-mail.

– Harlan Hague

KELLY OLIVER. *Coyote: A Jessica James Mystery.* Kaos. Trade paperback, eBook, 323 pages, \$15.99, \$1.99, Kaos-Press.com.

Corruption and greed run rampant on the Montana plains, not unusual in the quest for oil. Murder, drugs and human trafficking are not far behind, spreading from the oil fields to the Blackfeet Reservation. This time, the seeds of crime reach back 11 years to when Jessica James's father was killed in a bus accident, along with an Indian woman and her baby. Fast forward to present day, when Jessica is swept into investigating her cousin's macabre death in a sawmill. An unlikely ally is Kimi Redfox, an Indian activist whose young sisters have been hooked on drugs and forced into the sex trade. How these "ripped from the headlines" story lines coincide makes for a fine read.

– Carol Crigger

ANNE SCHROEDER. *Maria Inés.* Five Star. Hardcover, 230 pages, \$25.95, Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar.

Set in the early 1800s as the Catholic missionaries secularize the native peoples of California, the story follows

the hard existence of a woman born of the old ways even as her way of life and her people are destroyed by Spanish, Mexican and American invaders. Often heartbreaking, the story of the Salinan people is faithfully depicted in Anne Schroeder's vivid prose. The reader will be amazed by the resilience and toughness of these people who were treated so cruelly. Meticulously researched, the book contains a glossary of Salinan words as well as a glossary of Spanish words and a list of recommended reading on the topic.

– Carol Crigger

WALLACE J. SWENSON. *Laramie: Journey to the White Clouds*. Five Star. Hardcover, 360 pages, \$25.95, Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar.

In the fourth of the "Journey to the White Clouds" series, Wallace Swenson continues developing his well-rounded main characters and populates the novel with a strong supporting cast. Young Simon Steele and Buell Mace find themselves at Fort Laramie and take jobs at a nearby roadhouse where each, in his own way, contributes to the success of the place while attempting to sort out their own lives and futures. Owing to the author's untimely death, Five Star is working with his son to bring out still another novel in the series. Swenson's fans – which should include all lovers of Western fiction – will look forward to his next entry ... and be saddened that we will see no more of this fine author's work.

– Rod Miller

BEN TYLER. *Mabry's Challenge*. Five Star. Hardcover, 262 pages, \$25.95, Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar.

Texas U.S. Deputy Marshal Frank Mabry is forced by his boss, Marshal Banister, to partner with a greenhorn lieutenant. They are assigned by the War Department to track down the outlaws who killed five soldiers and made off with \$500,000 in paper bills and gold coins. The adventures they encounter as they pursue the outlaws will keep you in suspense. The story is a great read.

– Lowell F. Volk

ALETHEA WILLIAMS. *Náápiikoan Winter*. CreateSpace. Trade paperback, 286 pages, \$19.95, Amazon.com.

In this work of historical fiction, the author tells of the abduction of a young Mexican girl who is kidnapped by the Apaches, then stolen, sold or traded through the years. Yet she does not try to escape, and finally earns a place of importance with the Piika'ni tribe. After digging into historical sources and discovering that captives often did not escape their bondage, Alethea Williams accordingly went on to draw a credible character for this story. The Wyoming writer has penned a good novel to take its place beside her two other award-winning novels.

– Lynn Bueling

CALLAN WINK. *Dog Run Moon*. Dial. Hardcover, 256 pages, \$26, PenguinRandomHouse.com.

Michigan-born Callan Wink, a fly-fishing guide and short-story writer in Livingston, Montana, has put together an impressive debut collection of contemporary stories set mostly in Wyoming and Montana. He writes of a Custer re-enactor who has a long affair with an Indian woman, of a father and son lost on the Crow reservation on a fishing trip and of a construction worker on the run with a dog he has stolen. The nine stories are told with humor and a keen understanding of the human psyche. They are perhaps not for all tastes, but fans of Annie Proulx and Sherman Alexie will likely be more than satisfied.

MICHAEL ZIMMER. *The Rusted Sun*. Five Star. Hardcover, 270 pages, \$25.95, Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar.

I keep waiting for this author to write a bad – even mediocre – novel, but he hasn't done it yet. A traditional-type Western, this book starts with a sick and wounded man riding into an isolated town and, through no fault of his own, killing two opponents in a gunfight. As he holes up to recover from his illness, the rancher who runs the valley and the town sets out to intimidate the community into submission as he kills or drives away homesteaders

and ranchers he believes threaten his kingdom. The recovering hero comes back to town to clear his name and finds himself in the middle of the war, helping mostly reluctant and uncooperative town folk save their community. Another good read from a Western Heritage Wrangler Award-winning writer.

– Rod Miller

POETRY

EMMY PEREZ. *With the River on Our Face*. University of Arizona Press. Trade paperback, 96 pages, \$16.95, uapress.arizona.edu.

Emmy Perez proves herself adept at writing free verse and prose poetry in this volume where her love of and concerns for the contemporary Southwest become obvious. A line in one politically charged poem alludes to the building of a border wall by stating, "The river rushes past, and people still possess the need to cross it." Sprinkled with literary allusions, place names and archaeological sites, she exhibits the talents of a serious poet.

– Lynn Bueling

RED SHUTTLEWORTH. *To Begin With*. Bunchgrass. Chapbook, price not listed, PoetRedShuttleworth.Blogspot.com.

One of the West's premier poets, whose collection *Straight Ahead* was due out in January from Blue Horse Press, offers five stunning poems in this limited-edition chapbook. Red Shuttleworth captures the essence of the American West, then and now. He even offers sage advice, like this line from "Ragged in Belleville, Kansas": "Never stop at a roadhouse named *The Skulls*,/nor dance with a blonde peeling marriage scars."

Tucson festival

WWA members' books published in 2016 and 2017 can be displayed at the Tucson Festival of Books. Mail to Johnny D. Boggs, 10 Dovela Road, Santa Fe, NM 87508. Books won't be returned and must be received by March 5.