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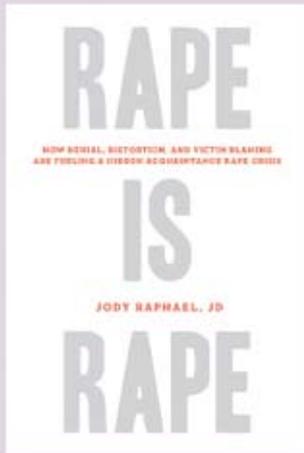
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**HARLEY LOCO: A Memoir of Hard Living, Hair, and Post-Punk from the Middle East to the Lower East Side**

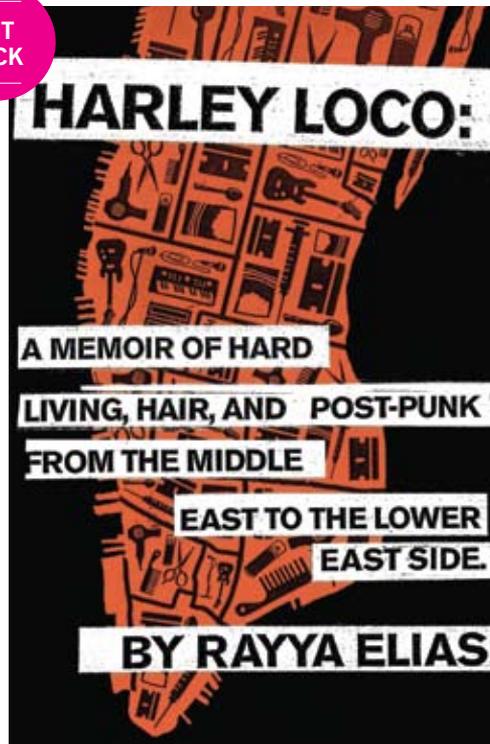
By Rayya Elias  
(Viking)

☉ ☉ ☉ ☉

A veritable Jane-of-all-trades, Rayya Elias has been a musician, hair stylist, inmate, addict, and now, author. *Harley Loco* begins in 1967, when seven-year-old Elias and her family flee their home country, Syria, for Detroit. As she struggles with bullying by her peers, Elias gains the respect of her classmates by taking her first hit of mescaline at school. Drugs quickly become a source of power and help to soothe the internal rift created by the life she left behind.

With a talent for hairstyling and a passion for music, Elias drifts from Detroit to Manhattan after high school and falls into the drug-infested art scene of the 1980s. For a short while, she is a successful stylist, up-and-coming musician, and a young woman exploring her lesbian identity far from the watchful gaze of her family. But as quickly as her success comes, she throws it away for the next hit of heroin or cocaine.

Elias takes us through those years of hell and back with a straightforward, no-nonsense style. More than a memoir, Elias' tale—from Syria in the 1960s to New York in the 1980s—offers a street-level snapshot of some of history's most critical time periods. Through her intimate storytelling, we get a glimpse into the highly personal struggle of addiction and the powerlessness of those caught in its grip. More than anything, *Harley Loco* is the story of someone who's lived life as hard as she could. —ERICA VARLESE



and she handles them with honesty and level-headedness. There's also a passage on feeling both lost and at home in New York City that, while not terribly original, is touching and relatable. It's in these subjects that the author sheds her *aren't I an adorable mess?* kind of attitude, and where the book becomes most affecting. Perhaps Nugent's collection should be called *Stick with It, It Gets Better*—her life might not, but the book definitely does. —MOLLY LABELL



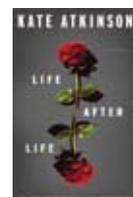
**HONOR**  
By Elif Shafak  
(Viking Press)

☉ ☉ ☉ ☉

*Honor* is a novel about twin sisters—one who marries and moves to London and the other who stays behind in their Turkish village—and follows the pains they go through for love, family, and tradition, even when that tradition is honor killing.

In the 1970s, Pembe and her husband Adem move to London for a better life. As they try to fit into a different culture, their loveless marriage crumbles, and Adem leaves Pembe to fend for herself and their children alone. When Pembe begins seeing a new man, it falls to her oldest son to defend the family honor. Meanwhile Jamila, the other twin, stays in their native village, becomes a midwife, and contends with the Turkish culture changing around her.

Elif Shafak's writing is terrific; she really brings you into the family's daily life. The story grips you from its first pages and keeps you wondering: What would drive a person to kill one of their own in the name of honor? —JENNIFER WELSING

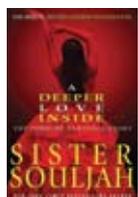


**LIFE AFTER LIFE:**  
A Novel

By Kate Atkinson  
(Reagan Arthur)

☉ ☉ ☉ ☉ ☉

Ursula Todd is born and dies dur-



**A DEEPER LOVE INSIDE:**

**The Porsche Santiago Story**

By Sister Souljah  
(Atria/Emily Bestler)

☉ ☉ ☉ ☉ ☉

*A Deeper Love Inside* is the long-awaited sequel to Sister Souljah's 1999 novel *The Coldest Winter Ever*, which told the story of Winter Santiago, the teenage daughter of a big-time drug dealer. *A Deeper Love* picks up the story where the other book left off, from the point of view of Porsche, Winter's younger sister. After their father gets locked up, Porsche ends up in a juvenile detention center, where she struggles with hatred towards most of her peers and gets into violent situations. Then she joins a girl gang called the Diamond Needles, and the members teach her how to control her rage while pulling

her into an elaborate and gruesome plot to escape the center.

Sister Souljah writes the way her protagonist would speak, complete with urban slang, resulting in a style that is both unusual and realistic. Despite its hefty 432 pages, this novel is a quick and exciting read that shows how a young woman grows to overcome hardships when there is little or no hope. Add this one, right under *The Coldest Winter Ever*, to your "must read" list. —ANDREA GRIGOROPOL



**DON'T WORRY, IT GETS WORSE: One Twentysomething's (Mostly Failed) Attempts at Adulthood**

By Alida Nugent

(Plume)

☉ ☉ ☉

Alida Nugent, of The Frenemy blog

fame, has brought her witty snark to the literary world with this debut. The book—a collection of short essays on 20-something life—has fine writing and some genuinely funny lines, but I was initially put off by the subject matter. Nugent spends a lot of time bragging about failed attempts at maturity, seems to revel in her emotional and financial instability, and spends too many pages discussing how best to drink in front of your parents—all with a self-awareness that seems like an insincere exaggeration of her flaws. *It Gets Worse* isn't all cutesy catastrophe, though. Towards the end, Nugent lessens the tongue-in-cheek act and seems to grow up in front of our eyes. She starts to write about panic attacks and weight issues, more sensitive topics than I had expected from those earlier, more hyper essays,

ing a snowstorm in England in 1910. The next time she is born in that snowstorm, circumstances change and she lives. And so Kate Atkinson's compelling novel bears witness to a life and the ability to change it, given a second (or third, or more) chance. Although Ursula dies at the end of each version of her life, she manages to change the outcome the next time around, as one avoided or changed moment dictates a whole different path. It's a complex idea that Atkinson renders with feminist flare, dealing with rape, spousal abuse, abortion, suffragettes, and more in the context of Ursula's different paths. We follow her through World War II and watch as the English keep calm and carry on, which Atkinson also shows with humor and style. Slightly elegiac, her writing is descriptive and also provocative: "Ursula craved solitude but she hated loneliness, a conundrum that she couldn't even begin to solve." The nonlinear story is hauntingly beautiful and somehow progresses through time—a difficult and original feat. Once I found the rhythm of the writing, I didn't want the story to end.

—ELIZABETH ZIFF



**THE MOVEMENT OF STARS:**  
A Novel

By Amy Brill  
(Riverhead)  
(c) (c) (c)

Introverted, respectable, intelligent, and devoutly Quaker, Hannah Gardner Price spends her days working at the local Nantucket Atheneum and her nights scanning the stars in search of a comet that she hopes will earn her a prestigious King of Denmark Prize. But in 1845, the path to scientific achievement isn't an easy one for a single girl of 24, and Hannah soon finds herself at a crossroad when her father announces he's remarriage and moving to Philadelphia, meaning Hannah must either marry ASAP or abandon her night-sky vigils. As she contemplates a marriage of convenience, Hannah begins to fall in love with a whaler who, like Hannah, finds his dreams hemmed in by society's prejudices. As their feelings for each other intensify and community censure begins to rain down upon their interracial romance, Hannah finds herself questioning all she's been taught about race, community, and character.

Using the famed 19-century astronomer Maria Mitchell as her model, Amy Brill has cast Hannah

as a strong, feminist protagonist. Although at times Hannah's path to independence is frustratingly slow, overall it's an inspiring tale that is full of twists—most surprising, but a few less so. Detailed, but readable, *The Movement of Stars* proves that historical fiction doesn't need to have royal intrigue or bodice-ripping sex scenes to be interesting.

—ERICA WETTER



**SEXY FEMINISM:**  
A Girl's Guide to Love, Success, and Style

By Jennifer Keishin Armstrong and Heather Wood Rudolph

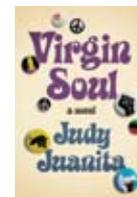
(Mariner Books)

(c) (c) (c)

Authors Jennifer Keishin Armstrong and Heather Wood Rudolph wanted to "dispel negative ideas about feminism" and give ladies "the tools to bring feminist ideals into their daily lives." The result, part feminist primer and part self-help book, is certainly accessible: the chapters are loosely-organized riffs from a friendly and well-read perspective. The first half gets into ethical aspects of typical women's magazine fodder: bikini waxing, plastic surgery, dieting, and fashion. The more interesting second half

deals with relationships and social issues. The book offers thought-provoking quotes, lots of pop culture references, profiles of contemporary female role models from Lady Gaga to Michelle Obama, and a recommended reading list at the back. Also included are short, fun-to-read personal narratives that relate to the chapter topics.

Less successful are the media-fed generalizations, like "women are hardly ever seen in public sans makeup" and "we feel guilty for eating our own birthday cakes," that have snuck into the book. Then there are the glossy lips on the cover, the oft-repeated enthusiasm for bikini waxing, and the title itself—as if feminism on its own isn't enough. *Sexy Feminism* would make a worthy gift for that coworker in six-inch heels who thinks Rihanna's devotion to Chris Brown is romantic, but those who guiltlessly feed cake into their unmade faces might want to give it a pass. —MEREDITH COUNTS



**VIRGIN SOUL:**  
A Novel

By Judy Juanita  
(Viking)

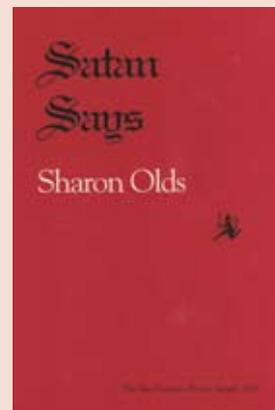
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*Virgin Soul* is the fictional memoir



**Amber Tamblyn's Poetry Corner**

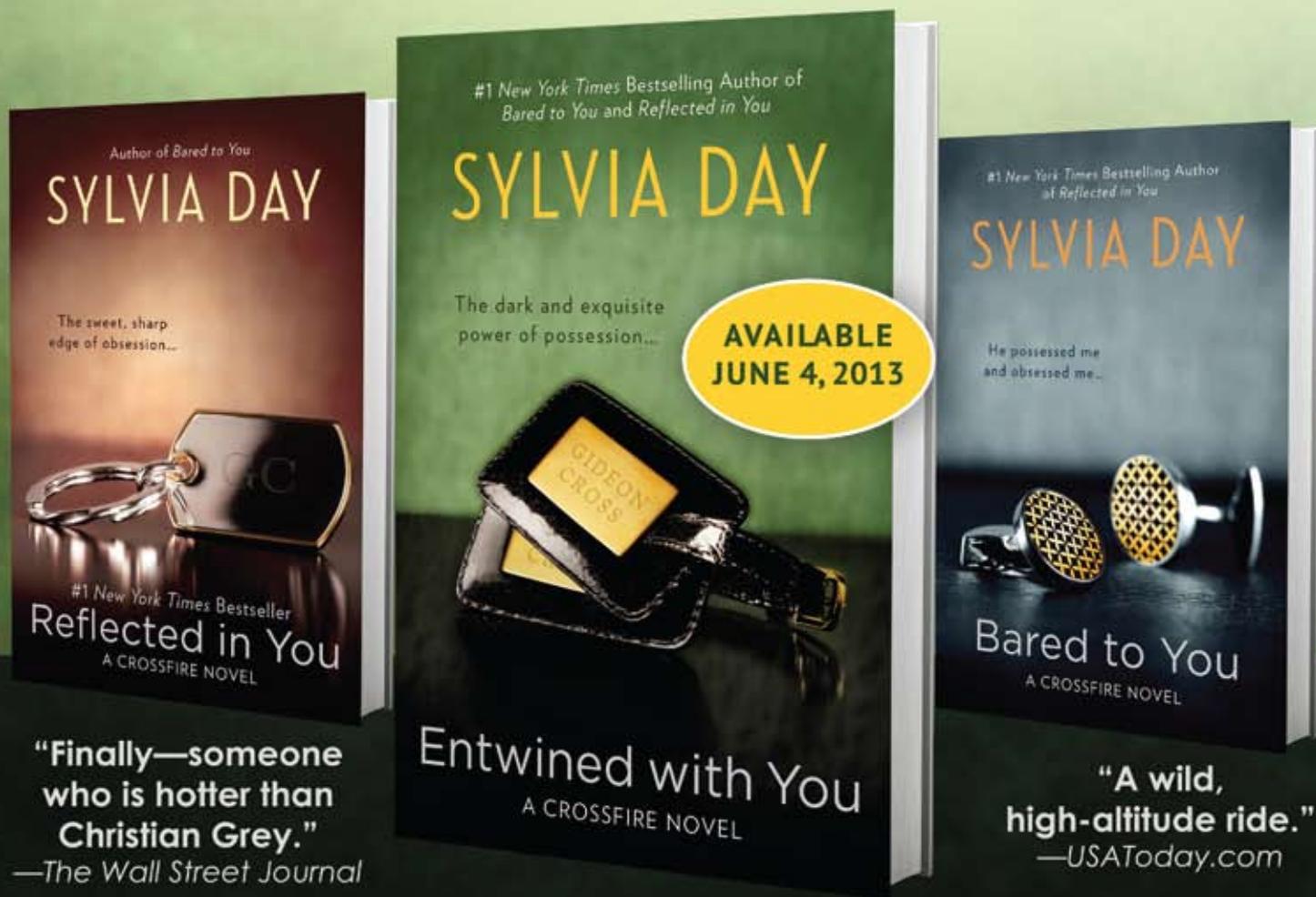
It's important to me to share not only new poetry books by women in this lil' BUST bubble of mine, but also to introduce readers to the ones that made me fall head over vagina for poetry in the first place. Enter Sharon Olds' 1980 debut poetry collection, *Satan Says* (University of Pittsburgh Press). One cannot be an aspiring female writer, or witch goddess, or truck driver without owning this masterpiece. "Satan/ comes to me in the locked box/, " Olds writes in the title poem, "and says I'll get you out. Say/ My father is a shit. I say/ my father is a shit and Satan/ laughs and says, it's opening./ Say your mother is a pimp./ My mother is a pimp. Something/ opens and breaks when I say that." And later, in another piece titled "That Year": "...in Social Studies, we came at last/ to Auschwitz, in my ignorance/ I felt as if I recognized it/ like my father's face, the face of a guard/ turning away—or worse yet/ turning toward me." Olds is a poetic outlaw, braver than all the rest and twice as dangerous. This book holds all others at knifepoint and demands to know who the truly original emotional gangster really is.



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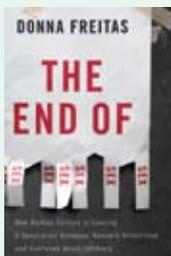
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## It's Not Easy Being Sleazy

BOOKS THAT LAY BARE THE SEX LIVES OF YOUNG WOMEN



### THE END OF SEX: How Hookup Culture Is Leaving a Generation Unhappy, Sexually Unfulfilled, and Confused About Intimacy

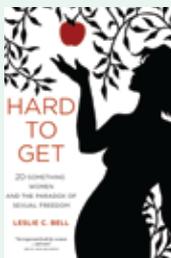
By Donna Freitas

(Basic Books)

☉ ☉ ☉ ☉ ☉

Hookup culture has attracted considerable media attention lately, thanks to books like *The End of Men* and *Unhooked*, which celebrate no-strings-attached physical intimacy as empowering to women and censure it as exploitative of women, respectively. The feminist author of *The End of Sex*, professor Donna Freitas, takes a more equitable, nuanced view, concluding that the rise of hookup culture is detrimental to everyone because it creates barriers to genuine sexual expression by substituting a drunken, ritualized performance, modeled on porn, for an authentic exchange of erotic pleasure. Using interviews and online surveys, Freitas found that deep down, what most college students want is to form an emotionally meaningful relationship with a valued partner, but don't know how to anymore, because hookup culture has edged out romance.

—RENATE ROBERTSON



### HARD TO GET: 20-Something Women and the Paradox of Sexual Freedom

By Leslie C. Bell

(University of California Press)

☉ ☉ ☉ ☉

Is vulnerability the new taboo? So suggests sociologist/psychotherapist Leslie Bell in this trenchant study of college-educated young women and sexuality. According to Bell, her admittedly small sampling of interviewees yielded a pervasive social truth: it's common for 20-something women—expected to experiment sexually and postpone (or opt out of) marriage and motherhood—to feel an unresolvable split between independence and control versus need and desire.

Bell laments their ways of managing this ambivalence; her so-called Sexual Woman is comfortable being carnal but not with letting her guard down, and the Relational Woman sacrifices sexual autonomy for emotional connectedness. Ideally, both of these types could learn to become the Desiring Women, embracing and integrating each aspect equally. Bell hopes to dislodge embedded stereotypes of men as subject and women as object and defuse the fear that our sexuality is dangerous. Her book just might help that happen.

—FRAN WILLING



### SCREW EVERYONE: Sleeping My Way to Monogamy

By Ophira Eisenberg

(Seal Press)

☉ ☉ ☉ ☉

Comedian and NPR host Ophira Eisenberg's debut follows her transformation from promiscuous slut to devoted wife. Her memoir runs the gamut of mating topics—from unplanned pregnancy to religion—though accounts featuring family are especially comical. "My brothers and sisters loved telling anyone who would listen how my mother cried and cried when she found out she was pregnant with me," writes Eisenberg. "They took to calling me 'The Mistake.' Once I asked my mom about this, and she told me not to worry, we were *all* mistakes." Despite the title, Canada's "yes" girl offers no apologies for her looseness, explaining early on that she faced down death at a young age, which instilled a sense of urgency in her relationships. Numerous floozies out there will find truth in Eisenberg's account, but even if you're not one, you should read it because it's funny. And fast. —WHITNEY DWIRE

of Geniece Hightower, an aspiring journalist undergoing a journey of self-discovery during the Black Power movement in 1960s San Francisco. Divided into four sections, each dedicated to a year of her university schooling, the novel follows Geniece's transition from focused scholar to revolutionary panther. While researching a story for her college newspaper, she meets Allwood, a highly intellectual activist who pulls Geniece into the rebellious world of the Black Panther Party. When he moves out of the picture, Geniece grows deeply involved in the movement and begins losing her grip on her formerly innocent self. Over time, she reveals her increasingly complex feelings toward the party and its members. The BPP causes Geniece to contemplate her values and priorities in life, raising important questions regarding the role of violence in the organization.

Judy Juanita demonstrates strong knowledge of the subject matter with her well-executed portrayals of major party members like Huey P. Newton, Bobby Seale, and George W. Sams Jr. With *Virgin Soul*, she brings up fascinating socio-political topics, such as the appearance and dress of African American women in the '60s. However, the author tends to spell things out for the reader, resulting in a lack of romanticism that could have brought the novel's fictional characters to life. Despite the somewhat trite ending, *Virgin Soul* tells an entertaining story of a young woman's experience with one of the most radical counterculture organizations in America's history. —TESS DUNCAN



### WOKE UP LONELY:

A Novel

By Fiona Maazel

(Graywolf Press)

☉ ☉ ☉ ☉

At the center of *Woke Up Lonely* is Esme, an FBI agent who spends

her days tracking the activity of the Helix, a cult that pulls in members by promising to cure the chronic loneliness that plagues their lives. The cult is led by Thurlow, a man who also happens to be Esme's ex-husband and the father of her 10-year-old daughter. When the Helix accepts funding from North Korea, the FBI sets its sights on dismantling this potential danger.

Maazel takes a cue from Kurt Vonnegut by creating a novel that blends the plot of a dramatic thriller with wacky humor and bits of science fiction. The story jumps from realistic drama one second to absurd comedy the next. In a particularly laugh-inducing scene, an FBI agent who escapes being held hostage is so eager to have her first sexual experience, she attempts to seduce her colleague while he is still hooded and handcuffed. Esme

dons ridiculous disguises in order to get closer to the Helix's members, and her own consistently disastrous sex life is a harbinger of what's to come. Beneath the novel's humor is also a deeper rumination on the problem of loneliness, showing Thurlow as a powerful man who wants nothing more than to get back his wife and daughter. Maazel's novel is surely an unusual one, both in plot and tone, with pacing that is sometimes inconsistent. Nonetheless, it will appeal to fans of both Vonnegut's work and of dark humor. —ADRIENNE URBANSKI



**WOMEN OF THE UNDERGROUND: ART: Cultural Innovators Speak for Themselves**  
By Zora von Burden  
(Manic D Press)



In *Women of the Underground: Art*, Zora von Burden gives a voice to 24 female artists who have too often been overlooked by the mainstream media. While some names may be recognizable to the average feminist art fan—Marina Abramovic, Barbara Kruger, The Guerilla Girls—many of them will be new. Burden is interested in women on the outer fringes like Orlan, a French performance artist who once went through nine face-altering surgeries as a way of confronting male-defined womanhood. Burden, who previously wrote a book about female musicians of the underground, also tackles lesser-known art forms like the Stamp and Mail Art Movement, which is a network of artists who mail music, photographs, and poetry to one another.

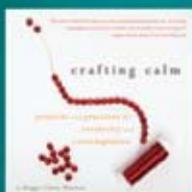
Each of Burden's Q&As helps rewrite the history (or herstory)

of the art world and gives readers an idea of what these women were truly up against. Graffiti artist Lady Pink addresses the changing laws of her medium, while photographer Irina Ionesco, whose macabre self-portrait graces the book's cover, talks candidly about her erotic work being called pornography.

Though the book takes a much-needed look at radical female artists, it is not an easy read. The interviews, which are clearly well-researched, tend to drag on, making you wish Burden had taken a heavier hand with her editing to help highlight the most interesting parts of her conversations instead of keeping every minute detail. That being said, if you're interested in studying the ins and outs of the underground art world, Burden has written the book for you. —SHANNON CARLIN

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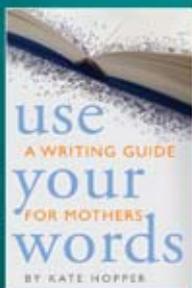
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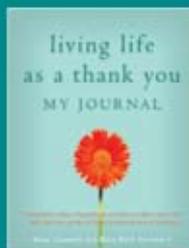
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