

Reviews

Fiction

Friendly Fire

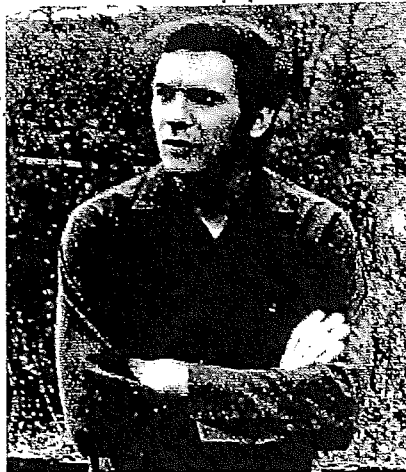
A.B. Yehoshua, trans. from the Hebrew by Stuart Schoffman. Harcourt, \$26 (400p)
ISBN 978-0-15-101419-4

Celebrated Israeli novelist Yehoshua (*A Woman in Jerusalem*) explores the power of grief and bitterness in a blunt drama studded with political, historical and religious significance. In Tel Aviv, 60-year-old Amotz Ya'ari is separated for a week from his wife Daniela when she flies to Tanzania to mourn her dead sister, Shuli, and visit with brother-in-law Yirmi. Soon after Daniela arrives in Tanzania, where Yirmi works for a team of archeologists at an excavation, it becomes apparent that another death—that of Yirmi and Shuli's son, an Israeli soldier who was killed by friendly fire seven years before the novel begins—preoccupies the family. Back in Tel Aviv, Amotz, both professionally and personally, shows himself to be a compassionate and deeply moral man—a striking counterpoint to his self-centered wife. The scenes at Yirmi's dig are lit with hope for Africa's future, though the narration can be naïve about the continent's present and tends to caricaturize Daniela. In contrast, Yehoshua's descriptions of life in Israel are full and revelatory, and his despairing view of entrenched resentments becomes a stirring plea for empathy and rationality. (Nov.)

The Journey

H.G. Adler, trans. from the German by Peter Filkins. Random, \$26 (320p)
ISBN 978-1-4000-6673-5

In this ambitious and challenging re-discovery, originally published in 1962, Adler (1910–1988) relates the tragic tale of the Lustig family—doctor Leopold; his wife, Caroline; their children, Zerlina and Paul; and Caroline's sister, Ida—who are sent to the walled city of Ruhenthal after authorities label them “forbidden.” Taking place during an unspecified period of war and genocide, the story is based on Adler's experiences at Theresienstadt, a



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David Rhodes returns after 30 years with the expansive and affecting *Driftless* (review, p. 30).

labor camp where he was imprisoned for two and a half years during WWII. An unidentified narrator reports the Lustigs' struggles in a stream-of-consciousness style, diverging frequently into the lives of others, among them Johann, a street sweeper, and Balthazar, a reporter. Attempting to reproduce authentically the characters' nightmarish disorientation, Adler's narrative style is aggressively abstract—constantly shifting subjects and setting in a convoluted sense of time and sequence. It's a difficult, admirable undertaking, for fans of experimental fiction, but many readers will find its structure frustrating and inaccessible. (Nov.)

Texas Sunrise

Elmer Kelton. Forge, \$24.95 (368p) ISBN 978-0-7653-2064-3

The latest from prolific Texan novelist Kelton (*Hard Trail to Follow*) is really two novels, both concerning the Texas revolution against Mexico as witnessed by two young brothers, Joshua and Thomas Buckalew. In the first book, “Massacre at Goliad,” the Buckalews' dream of adventure and free land is dispelled by the harsh reality of the West: hard work, Indians, bandits and the simmering cultural, racial and political animosity between Americans and Mexicans. When violence finally breaks out, the boys miss the slaughter at the Alamo only to be caught up in the massacre of Texan prisoners at Goliad. Only one brother survives, going on to avenge Goliad at the Battle of San Jacinto. In “After the Bugles,” the surviving brother returns home to rebuild his

ranch and his life, but must contend with cheating opportunists, murderous outlaws and deadly Comanche attacks, as well as growing Texan racism against his Mexican friends and neighbors. As with all of Kelton's westerns, characters are colorful and well drawn, the action is fast and bloody, and the plotting carefully thought out, making this another supercharged yarn. (Nov.)

The Seine Was Red: Paris, October 1961

Leïla Sebbar, trans. from the French by Mildred Mortimer. Indiana Univ., \$45 (144p)
ISBN 978-0-253-35246-0; \$17.95 paper
ISBN 978-0-253-22023-3

First published in France in 1999, Sebbar's political novel is a significant, self-conscious attempt to shatter the official silence surrounding the October 17, 1961, Algerian demonstration in Paris that ended in bloodshed. Sebbar (*Soldats*) sets her novel in contemporary Paris among several Algerian-French families whose elders lived through the events of that fateful day, when violence broke out and demonstrators were beaten, thrown into the Seine, imprisoned (and in some cases deported) by the police. Amel, a young Nanterre University student, is the granddaughter of Algerian immigrants who spent a stretch in La Santé prison for subversive acts. When the curious teenager finally learns the truth about her grandparents, it's in a documentary film made by her childhood friend, Louis, about La Santé's role in the Algerian war for independence. Inspired, Amel and a new acquaintance, an Algerian newspaper correspondent, undertake a pilgrimage to various sites in Paris that played important parts in the fight for independence. While Sebbar's method is sketchy and pointed, the cumulative effect of Amel's quest to unearth the truth proves moving and cathartic. (Nov.)

Testimony

Anita Shreve. Little, Brown, \$25.99 (320p)
ISBN 978-0-316-05986-2

Shreve's novels (*Body Surfing*; *The Weight of Water*) benefit from propulsive plots, and her mixed latest, with its timely theme of debauchery among children of privilege, does not lack in this regard. The first paragraph foreshadows a tragedy

