Self-Published Books Showcase

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from

blueink REVIEW

Adult

American Jap Girl.
By Richard Y. Okumoto.

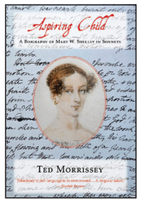
2026. 282p. Digital Lifestory, paper, $14.99 (9781971076010). 818.

In his mother's voice, Okumoto recounts her life story, spanning the mid-1920s to the turn of the twenty-first century in Southern California. Due to her parents' financial struggles, Okumoto's mother Tome is adopted by relatives at age three, moving 50 miles away. She enjoys her youth as an "all-American farm girl"—until two years after graduating high school, when she's placed in an internment camp during WWII. At Arizona's Gila River Camp, she weds another detainee, has two daughters, and after the family's release in 1945, bears two sons. When an automobile accident disables her husband, Tome struggles to make ends meet while cleaning houses. Okumoto expresses Tome's profound disillusionment about the fact that Japanese Americans were "disdained as visual immigrants" during the war. Her voice is believable and poignant, and the story includes illuminating details. After war is declared on Japan, for example, she notes: "Confusion, posted signs saying NO JAPS, broken windows, and people screaming obscenities fill what was once a serene landscape." *American Jap Girl* offers keen insight into the Japanese American experience, portraying the psychological scars borne of poverty and prejudice, and underscoring the importance of purpose and resilience.

Aspiring Child.
By Ted Morrissey.

2026. 118p. Twelve Winters, $28.99 (9798993321509). 811.6.

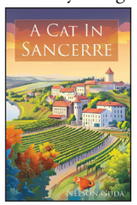
This visionary collection of linked, neoformal sonnets serves as a biography of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, beginning with her infancy and culminating in her adult life following the publication of *Frankenstein* and the death of her husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley. This is a unique approach to exploring a notable literary figure's life, and is educational and engaging even for those unfamiliar with Shelley or the Romantic poets with whom she interacted. In an epistolary manner, Morrissey addresses his sonnets to Shelley herself, balancing declarative details with meaningful questions. For instance, Morrissey asks, "How did you feel about your book?/ Simple relief at having finished it?/ A source of much-needed income?/ [. . .]/ Did you see all the parallels between/ your life and your book [. . .]?" The author is an accomplished scholar of Shelley's work, and his poems reflect this. Throughout, he incorporates quoted and paraphrased material from "letters, diaries, reviews, books," which enhance specificity and capture the zeitgeist in which Shelley lived. A loving epistle to a literary hero, this collection is a sui generis compendium, and will prove riveting for initiated and amateur Shelley readers alike.



A Cat in Sancerre.
By Nelson Guda.

2025. 410p. Burning Sky, paper, $19.99 (9798990885509).

This absorbing novel features Brooks Redgrave, a former Special Forces soldier turned photographer. Travelling the globe, he captured numerous portraits of individuals severely affected by living in a conflict zone. Now, Brooks decides to leave the New York art scene, feeling that his exhibits are "selling voyeurism of someone else's pain." In a self-imposed physical and emotional exile, he moves to Battlemore, an austere, 200-year-old historic refuge in Connecticut. There, he takes in a large, stray orange cat that he names Gusto. When Brooks learns that he might have a son in France—the result of sperm donations made during his college days—he embarks on a journey to find family members that he didn't know existed. Colorful characters populate the story, from a raucous Brazilian American ex-girlfriend to the quirky locals that Brooks meets in the small town of Sancerre. The dialogue is heartfelt and genuine, and Guda's lyrical writing captures the beauty of Sancerre's natural landscape and its sensory delights. With a textured storyline, notable characters, and magnificent epicurean delights, this well-crafted novel is a literary sojourn about newfound family, unexpected romance, and gratifying second chances.



The Disruption.
By W. H. Hilf.

2026. 478p. Atmosphere, paper, $21.99 (9798901740484).

This unsettling sf novel set predominantly in the year 2101 examines humanity's struggle decades after a cataclysmic event called The Disruption—caused by an AI system that disregarded the parameters of its programming—which resulted in the downfall of human civilization. Hilf's novel adopts a multi-narrative approach, alternating between a community of humans in the United States striving to survive a blighted, postapocalyptic landscape rife with religious paranoia and dysfunctional technologies, and a colony of humans who, having fled Earth following the disaster, have settled on a planet called Proxima Centauri b. There, they face a series of difficulties involving the AI system, called Geppetto, tasked with supporting them. The story is narratively complex, packed with socio-political intrigue and philosophical introspection. Although it lacks a standout protagonist, it features a vast ensemble of multi-faceted characters, including tech-curious teenager Riley, paranoid religious figurehead Ty Zimmer, and "mushroom scientist" Dr. Tom McCreary. While the various narrative threads, settings, and differing character perspectives occasionally risk causing reader confusion, overall, *The Disruption* is an immersive sf thriller that will satisfy genre readers seeking an intellectually stimulating read.

The Ghost Case Posse.
By Joe Greco.

2025. 332p. BookBaby, paper, $16.99 (9798999855008).

Greco's novel draws from the case of the Golden State Killer, the serial rapist and murderer active in the 1970s and '80s brought to justice in 2018. Here, Dexter Wayne Jones is a confirmed serial rapist who never went to trial because it was decades before DNA technology could connect him to the heinous crimes. In the present day, Jones is charged with a triple homicide in fictional Murrieta County, California, and public defender Jedidiah "Jed" Bouvier is assigned to the case. After a hung jury in the first trial, the novel explores the circumstances surrounding the second trial. Jed, a reforming alcoholic, is convinced Jones is guilty, but takes his duty seriously. Meanwhile, he meets a beautiful woman at an AA meeting, unaware that she has ulterior motives for encouraging their relationship. The trial sequences sometimes lag, but the pages turn quickly toward the book's end. With an interesting premise and a protagonist torn by his weaknesses and the strength of his convictions, the story will satisfy thriller and mystery fans, as well as fans of TV shows like *Matlock* and *Law and Order*.

Hydroponics for Home and School Gardens.
By Laurie F. Ruberg.

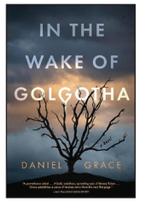
2025. 222p. Dorrance, paper, $56 (9798891276758). 635.

Impressively detailed and refreshingly hopeful, this is an essential primer for anyone interested in hydroponics, including hobbyists and "those exploring entrepreneurial hydroponics projects." Hydroponics is a potentially revolutionary method for individuals and communities to grow plants without soil, achieved by delivering nutrient-rich hydration to the plants' roots. Ruberg, a hydroponics and STEAM educator who has spent decades spreading this philosophy, adroitly begins by reinforcing the myriad benefits of hydroponic systems, including their positive ecological impacts and resilience-boosting and community-building effects. She follows by debunking many of the knee-jerk objections to widespread implementation of these systems, and from there, methodically carries readers through each consideration related to planning, building, executing, and harvesting a hydroponic system. The text includes crop-specific advice and food safety guidelines, and addresses big-picture food security concerns. This is a concise, educational, and compelling text, offering a wealth of wisdom from an eminently qualified proponent of seismic agricultural change.

In the Wake of Golgotha.
By Daniel Grace.

2026. 354p. Koehler, $31.95 (9798888248966).

Grace's novel—which blends speculative fiction, crime thriller, and reimagined Christian mythology—follows a reincarnated Pontius Pilate and Judas Iscariot as they struggle to atone for their roles in Christ's crucifixion. In what's become a high-profile case, New York City defense attorney Peter Pheiffer is selected to represent Balthazar Bedrossian, an unhinged MRI technician who stands accused of crucifying three male victims in his Chinatown apartment. Meanwhile, Jude Issachar is a part-time social worker and professor who has a strange obsession with asphyxiation, particularly via a noose. As Peter and Jude's lives intersect, they begin to understand that their past lives (Peter having been a Roman governor, and Jude a zealot who'd vowed revenge against the Judean empire) have positioned them to finally understand their involvement in Christ's betrayal and heal their endless guilt. The story includes numerous, sometimes humorous, references to iconic writers and literary works, and Grace is a storyteller glorying in his element. Ultimately, the narrative transcends the boundaries of Christian fiction and explores what it means to be human in a fallen world. Fans of faith-based fiction will cherish this wildly entertaining tale of resurrection, reincarnation, and redemption.



Making My Way.
By Damaris Melo-Gyasi.

2026. 336p. Journeyline, paper, $22.95 (9798218878498). 818.6.

In this exceptional memoir, architect and Afro Brazilian immigrant Damaris Melo-Gyasi reflects on her journey of personal growth and white-knuckled resilience that began in inner-city São Paulo. Melo-Gyasi was the youngest daughter in a working-class household. One evening, the seven-year-old Melo-Gyasi stumbled upon her parents in the kitchen, speaking to the female architect who'd been hired to build the family's new house. Melo-Gyasi was impressed by the woman's fashionable outfit and professionalism—and that she inhabited a world far removed from the patriarchal obedience of Melo-Gyasi's family's Pentecostal faith. Inspired, she was determined to become an architect, but faced nearly unbearable challenges: backlash from her church community, financial insecurity, debilitating anxiety, sexual harassment from a professor, and more. Melo-Gyasi persisted, however, eventually landing a job at an Arizona architecture firm. The author delivers emotional clarity and honesty, rejecting self-pity to embrace humor, grace, and self-compassion. Her faith is the book's beating heart, discussed earnestly and without proselytizing. Melo-Gyasi's language choice ("I felt as small and vulnerable as a cricket on a new-mown lawn") conjures vivid images and reinforces her rich narrative voice, creating a profound testament to the endurance of the human spirit.

Promising Young Man.
By Elias Axel.

2025. 240p. My Delightful Life, paper, $17.99 (9798992065602).

In this winning coming-of-age novel, 18-year-old Oscar is a good kid diagnosed with ADHD who is unable—or unwilling—to finish his final few requirements to graduate with his senior class. He's constantly high and often wallows in his failures and disappointments. Oscar's only solace is spending time with his aging dog and his one-day-a-week job at Oh Henry's diner, where he connects with both the regulars and the owner, Mr. Henry. But on prom night, Oscar gets wasted and soon finds himself in trouble for trashing the very diner he loves—despite having no real memory of what happened. In a last-ditch effort to help Oscar, his parents engineer a cross-country trip with his Grammy to satisfy her bucket list and hopefully get Oscar back on track. It's not an easy trip, and Oscar anxiously wants to get back home, but Grammy has her own agenda—and it's not all about Oscar. Peopled with interesting characters, this lengthy, bittersweet trip leads to poignant realizations among the cast. Whether readers identify with Oscar, Grammy, or Oscar's well-meaning helicopter mother, *Promising Young Man* is sweet and endearing, with something for everyone.

Youth

The Players We Were.
By Janelle Gabay.

2026. 358p. Independently Published, paper, $14.99 (9780996158855).

Gabay's YA novel, set in 2017, features Alex Calvo, a charity student at Florida's T.R. Tennis Academy, desperately pursuing a college scholarship. Meanwhile, Madison Nash is from a rich family and has addiction issues. To give her a fresh start, her father moves her from Atlanta to Florida, where she hopes to be seen "as just Madison . . . a tennis player, a human being," instead of "the slut, druggie, loser . . . that had been branded upon her." When Madison's father offers to pay Alex to become Madison's doubles partner, Alex agrees, even though it means hurting the feelings of her current partner. While playing alongside Madison, Alex is so focused on tennis and the potential scholarship that she resists becoming closer with her friend Tommy, another tennis star. Readers will be hooked on the off-court drama, wondering if Madison and Alex will ever become true friends and whether Alex will finally let Tommy in. Gabay also vividly portrays engaging on-court action, realistic teen challenges, and memorable characters. Tennis aficionados are sure to enjoy this novel, but even those who've never heard of Serena Williams will find Gabay's story irresistible.