

# Self-Published Books Showcase

These books are recommended by *BlueInk Review*, a fee-based review service. Every month, *BlueInk* will compile a list of their favorite self-published titles for *Booklist*, as a service to librarians hoping to incorporate self-published work into their collections. *BlueInk* was founded by Patti Thorn, former book review editor of Denver's *Rocky Mountain News*, and Patricia Moosbrugger, a literary agent who represents several best-selling authors. The company delivers professional, unbiased reviews of self-published books written by critics drawn largely from major mainstream publications and by editors from prominent publishing houses. Stars reflect the decisions of *BlueInk* reviewers and editors. *Booklist* is happy to bring this curated collection of the best in self-publishing for adults and youth to our audience.



## The Art of Symeon Shimin. Ed. by Tonia Shimin.

2019. 156p. Mercury Press International, \$40  
(9780999034224). 759.1.

Symeon Shimin, a Russian Jew who moved to America in 1912 at age 10, had a long, successful career in a variety of art-related fields. Along with creating a prominent painting for the Public Works of Art Project, he won awards for illustrating children's books and created the original poster for the film *Gone with the Wind*. Despite this, Shimin has never garnered the attention some insist he deserves. This book seeks to remedy that, with two essays by art journalists and a six-page autobiographical essay by Shimin himself, accompanied by photographs of the author and his work. Also included are a chronology; a list of awards, exhibitions, and collections; and other features that provide invaluable context for understanding the artist's career and motivations. The book's large size (9.5 inches by 11.5 inches) and excellent full-color printing successfully convey memorable, affecting images of many works that are otherwise inaccessible to the public, as they are held in private collections. This treasure trove of a book will hopefully deliver Shimin's accomplished images to a wide audience of art lovers.

## Both Things Are True: A Journey from Fearing Trust to Trusting Fear. By Janine Valentine.

2022. 174p. Cairn, paper, \$17.95 (9780578367057). 910.

In this gripping memoir, Valentine recounts her quarantine in a foreign country. On the final day of a luxury cruise on the Indian Ocean, Valentine is the only one of her group to test positive for COVID-19, and she's unable to reenter the U.S. Worse, the cruise company has no plans for the situation. She's transported to the city of Male in Maldives, where she realizes she has less than \$50 dollars in cash in a place that often demands cash only. Furthermore, the Maldives is a strict

Muslim country where women cover their bodies, but Valentine has only swimsuits and similar cruise-friendly clothing. Instructed by a crew member to lie if asked about COVID, she finds a hotel where she can quarantine for 14 days. In a bug-infested room and now sick, Valentine must figure out how to get food and treat her symptoms, all while keeping her illness secret. In less-skilled hands, the daily journal entries that largely comprise this memoir could grow monotonous, but this is a page-turner. In clear, candid writing, Valentine delivers a beat-by-beat account of what it's like to face a nightmarish experience that seemingly couldn't get worse, but does.

## ★ Denver Moon: The Thirteen of Mars.

By Warren Hammond and Joshua Viola.  
2022. 230p. Hex, paper, \$19.99 (9781736596463).

The rousing conclusion of the Denver Moon trilogy pits tenacious heroine Denver against technologically advanced insectoid aliens capable of annihilating humankind. As the story opens, Denver is confronting multiple crises. After finding lichen on Mars, she realizes the ambitious terraforming plan her beloved grandfather began decades earlier is working. But then she and her grandfather, the famed cofounder of Mars City, are attacked by deadly "bugs" and he's left brain-dead. To complicate matters, her failing eyes must be replaced ASAP. With her revered Red Planet about to be overrun by killer insect drones, Denver leaves Mars for the wasteland of Earth, seeking Dr. Stuart Werner, an insectoid alien who has spent years trying to subjugate humans through mind control. The brilliant Werner is the only possibility of saving Denver's grandfather. With humankind threatened, Denver also needs a miracle. The story is



powered by nonstop action, relentless pacing, memorable characters, and darkly atmospheric pulp-noir elements. If Isaac Asimov, Edgar Rice Burroughs, and Arthur C. Clarke were alive today, they'd be releasing stories like *Denver Moon*.

## Jovian Son.

By Kim Catanzarite.  
2022. 300p. Forster, paper, \$18 (9781735952239).

This sequel to *They Will Be Coming for Us* (2021) is a gripping blend of sf, love story, and thriller about the Jovians, a mysterious and wealthy family in a small Pennsylvania town. In the former story, Svetlana, a native Russian who was adopted by a local couple, fell in love with and married Andrew Jovian and gave birth to a son. After Andrew died of a biological defect, readers learned that the Jovians are aliens from Jupiter and Andrew was an experiment in their efforts to propagate on Earth. *Jovian Son* begins ten years later, with Svetlana and her son, Evander, living in Russia with her sister and hiding from her late husband's family. When Evander is kidnapped by her in-laws, however, Svetlana returns to Pennsylvania. Slowly, she reestablishes contact with the Jovians and with Andrew's best friend, an FBI agent who becomes her ally in finding Evander. With likable, believable characters; a rollicking, dialogue-driven plot; and artful writing, *Jovian Son* takes readers on a thrill ride to a satisfying if slightly improbable denouement that echoes the memorable, original love story.

## ★ Moral Fibre: A Bomber Pilot's Story.

By Helena P. Schrader.  
2022. 436p. Cross Seas, paper, \$19.95 (9781735313924).

Schrader's sequel to her novella *Lack of Moral Fibre* (2021) immerses readers in the life of Kit Moran, a WWII Royal Air Force pilot. With superb plotting, Schrader focuses on Kit, initially portrayed as a traumatized

veteran, accused of “lacking moral fibre” by the RAF and driven to rejoin out of guilt for his skipper’s death. The novel follows the exploits of Kit’s flight crew and his burgeoning love affair with Georgina, the fiancée of his late skipper. Readers watch his confidence as a bomber squadron pilot and his devotion to Georgina grow. Subplots concern Georgina, Kit’s extended family, and fellow crew members. For example, Adrian Peal, Kit’s navigator, comes from the English moneyed class and displays all the mannerisms of an upper-class gentleman with an upper-class education. Initially, this creates tension with other crew members who have little formal education and hail from impoverished families. Well-grounded in historical research and buttressed by Schrader’s re-creation of actual battles, this absorbing work is sure to interest not only WWII buffs but anyone who enjoys historical fiction.



After the COVID-19 pandemic made working remotely a necessity, many companies are returning to a more “normal,” in-office approach. Consultant and author Razzetti, however, believes a hybrid model of remote and in-person work is the new normal. In this valuable book, Razzetti explores principles and practices of corporate culture that will make this hybrid approach succeed. Based on his consulting experience as well as interviews with experts and practitioners, Razzetti’s plan outlines five steps for creating a culture optimized for hybrid work. He illustrates each step with brief examples and provides downloadable tools and practical exercises to implement his recommendations. He also offers concise recaps at the end of every chapter. Often challenging conventional wisdom, the author recognizes that one size doesn’t fit all and implies that moving in the right direction is more important than perfection. Writing in clear, concise, well-organized business prose, Razzetti has drawn an important road map for the future of work.

**Remote, Not Distant: Design a Company Culture That Will Help You Thrive in a Hybrid Workplace.**  
By Gustavo Razzetti.  
2022. 327p. Liberationist, paper, \$22.99 (9780999097397). 658.

★ **Still, the Sky.**  
By Tom Pearson.

★ **Remote, Not Distant: Design a Company Culture That Will Help You Thrive in a Hybrid Workplace.**  
By Gustavo Razzetti.

2022. 180p. Ransom Poet, paper, \$21 (9798430895471). 811.

Pearson offers an impeccably researched, elegantly designed collection combining poetry that explores and reimagines the dual bildungsromans of Icarus and Asterion with intriguing installation artwork that enhances the text. This dramatic, book-length poem—with a prologue, seven sections, and an epilogue—opens with the line “My departure instigated his exit,” immediately launching a well-paced journey that oscillates between action and dreamy lyric contemplation. While mythical allusions necessarily permeate this text, readers unfamiliar with Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and Greek mythology are still likely to be enticed by Pearson’s use of crisp, clear, free-verse quatrains to both narrative and lyric effect. For example, the section titled “The Rain Room” evocatively begins: “In the rain room, I rise to the sound of horse / Hooves on terra cotta tiles, the percussive / Romp of equine angels on red rooftops. Why / Has he come in this way?” Rendered with great aesthetic care, *Still, the Sky* is likely to engage both young, uninitiated readers with its coming-of-age quest narrative and world building appeal, and older, specialized readers with a background in classics, literature, and art history.



2022. 210p. The Snowlands Company, \$19.99 (9781737988700). 741.5.

Meroz’s ambitious graphic novel centers on Feba, a young, orphaned wolf cub who is solidly white, a feature so rare that it sparks fear and superstition among the wolf pack. When the sheep disappear from the Snowlands, a hostile terrain the wolves share with other creatures, pack leaders blame Feba. Forced to flee, Feba faces the wilds of the dangerous Shadowlands. What follows is an action-packed, dynamic adventure that masterfully blends themes of identity and abandonment with well-crafted fantasy fare, thanks in no small part to Collin Fogel’s stunning, fluid, evocative artwork. Text and imagery combine to summon a world where a menagerie of three-dimensional animal characters drive the moving, exciting, and believable story. Meroz doesn’t pull any punches in telling a tale set in a world ruled by animals and natural forces, so some scenes may disturb very young readers. Nevertheless, the novel includes enough tenderness, sensitivity, and clarity to keep YA graphic novel fans engaged, while older readers will also appreciate this thrilling tale and jaw-dropping artwork.



2019. 113p. Code Pineapple, paper, \$12.99 (9781950341078).

In Bowman’s first book in the illustrated

Vampire Detective Story series, 12-year-old Ellie—christened “Scaredy Bat” by her sister for her fear of spiders, monsters, and more—is excited to attend the royal wedding of vampire Prince Bennett to his human bride. Her mother hurries her because if the prince isn’t legally wed by 7 p.m., the crown passes to his brother, who has announced he’ll reverse the Fang and Flesh Peace Treaty, and Ellie’s parents’ vampire-human marriage will be invalid. At the venue, Ellie and her friend Jessica dash off to find a cool spot on this hot night, only to discover upon their return that the wedding participants have all been frozen solid. Aspiring detective Ellie enlists Jessica and two boys in her investigation. Together they brave the dark, spider-webbed corners of the wedding venue to save the day. Young mystery fans will relate to the tweens and delight in the vampire angle’s gross-out elements (eating spiders, drinking blood). The mystery is well plotted, and the author includes checklists that help readers track the suspects’ motives and opportunities. Young sleuths will be thrilled to learn there are many more installments of Ellie’s adventures to savor.

★ **Snowlands: A Blood Moon.**  
By Morr Meroz. Illus. by Collin Fogel.

2021. 210p. The Snowlands Company, \$19.99 (9781737988700). 741.5.

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When the sheep disappear from the Snowlands, a hostile terrain the wolves share with other creatures, pack leaders blame Feba. Forced to flee, Feba faces the wilds of the dangerous Shadowlands. What follows is an action-packed, dynamic adventure that masterfully blends themes of identity and abandonment with well-crafted fantasy fare, thanks in no small part to Collin Fogel’s stunning, fluid, evocative artwork. Text and imagery combine to summon a world where a menagerie of three-dimensional animal characters drive the moving, exciting, and believable story. Meroz doesn’t pull any punches in telling a tale set in a world ruled by animals and natural forces, so some scenes may disturb very young readers. Nevertheless, the novel includes enough tenderness, sensitivity, and clarity to keep YA graphic novel fans engaged, while older readers will also appreciate this thrilling tale and jaw-dropping artwork.

★ **Scaredy Bat and the Frozen Vampires.**  
By Marina J. Bowman.

2022. 207p. FCM, paper, \$7.99 (9781957047072).

In Holt’s erotic romance novel, Sarah comes home drunk after a girls’ night out and, in between bouts of vomiting, blurts out to her

★ **Scaredy Bat and the Frozen Vampires.**  
By Marina J. Bowman.

2019. 113p. Code Pineapple, paper, \$12.99 (9781950341078).

In Bowman’s first book in the illustrated