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James Alan McPherson and the Metaphor of Dance



These days, whenever I think of James McPherson I am reminded of Tia Sillers and Mark Sanders' 2000 Grammy-award-winning song "I Hope You Dance," with its call for the next generation to not take anything for granted in life and, instead, "dance" whenever the opportunity to do so arises. This was not always how I viewed the fiction writer. It was his winning of the 1978 Pulitzer Prize that first drew my attention to him. I was finishing up my final semester at Harvard Law School, about to graduate, and found no small degree of solace in learning that someone had already

But what about America's hypocrisy when it comes to captive tigers? Mills addresses this domestic issue as well. It is guesstimated that the United States (a country where the tiger is not even a native species) is home to 5,000 captive tigers. This figure, only a guess because of the lack of documentation regarding these animals, leads many to ask the question: "Why should China reduce its captive tiger population when the US is not doing so?"

Is the captive US tiger population somehow providing the black market with tiger parts? There is no evidence, but also very little investigation and, "a confusion of laws [regarding private ownership of big cats] with too many loopholes." Mills also poses a great question: "If the US were to ban private ownership of tigers would China do the same?"

This book is a fascinating insider's view on international wildlife conservation and trafficking. It is also a life's work. *Blood of the Tiger* serves as a microphone for beings that, despite having a spine-tingling roar, cannot truly speak. And they are being both held captive and decimated.

There are some who may claim the wild tiger as a "ghost species"—doomed and on a path to inevitable extinction. Yet, in nature, they are lords, reigning over the forests, jungles and taigas as supreme beings, utterly wild and utterly free. Protecting the tiger means protecting these wild places. *Blood of the Tiger* is a testament to the awesomeness of these creatures, but also the intense ethical dilemmas in which the human race has ensnared these animals. Tigers are at the center of a web of greed, imprisonment, degradation and destruction.

"We must work with the like-minded from within China to influence policy," Mills's Chinese friend and colleague, Grace Ge Gabriel, an advocate for wildlife says. "There is no other way." The wild tiger's fate is perhaps entirely in our hands.

— Kristin MacLeod-Johnson



the new black. By Evie Shockley. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2011. \$15.95 (pa.)

the new black is Evie Shockley's fourth book, and boldly re-asserts her as a poetic voice acutely aware of the state of the American racial landscape.

While the collection has been called a powerful re-imagination of blackness in America, I would instead label it a call to think of blackness more broadly and complexly. This call is embodied in the opening lines from "getting around utopia," which read: "if you're like me, you / closed your eyes one cool / November evening, and opened / them seconds later to see what / *at last* looked like." *At last* is not what we expected it to be, and this disillusionment characterizes the voice of the book.

While *the new black* does not offer any singular re-definition of blackness, it knowingly and thoughtfully speaks up into the ongoing conversation around the black American identity, and pokes and prods at our conceptions of not only race, but also place, womanhood, institutions, and corporations. The poetry pinpoints people

and images from California to Carolina to Cape Town, zooms out to re-imagine the lives of household names, then zooms in to celebrate a moment as intimate as a lover's touch. The poems are at once confronting and accessible, innovative and familiar. There are no attempts to placate readers or say anything kindly, there is nothing gestural about the poems' intent to call out a culture of greed, privilege and power. Shockley covers immense territory: historically, geographically, and thematically. This collection bears witness, powerfully, to the voices and lives of submerged people and places.

In the collection, Shockley navigates a variety of forms with ease, including villanelle, sonnet, and sestina. She is not afraid, though, of experimenting with form and language, most notably in the poems "dependencies," which seizes the Declaration of Independence and holds it as counter-voice to the speaker's experience visiting Thomas Jefferson's Monticello and imagining his life there; "explosives," which confines itself to variations on the same words and parts of speech line after line, creating a hauntingly repetitive juxtaposition of bombs and poetry; and "the cold," an 8-page lyric poem that is packed with white space and written in the collective first person, effectively enveloping readers in the harsh reality of how *the cold*—both literally and figuratively—impacts the structures, human and otherwise, exposed to it.

For readers looking for a challenging and masterful exploration of what we talk about when we talk about race, place, and womanhood, *the new black* is a wonderful and challenging read.

— Elisabeth Booze



We All Looked Up. By Tommy Wallach. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015. \$17.99

Remember that 80's classic, *The Breakfast Club*? This book is the 2015 version, only there is no Saturday detention; there's apocalypse. A meteor called Ardor is headed for Earth with a 66.6% chance of annihilating the planet. *We All Looked Up* features four main characters, Peter, Eliza, Anita, and Andy, each known as a high school stereotype: jock, slut, over achiever and slacker. What happens when sh*t threatens to hit the fan, or, in this case, planet? In the wake of possible Armageddon, destruction abounds, and everything starts to break down. The bare bones of all involved are revealed, unlikely couples are formed, and true strength comes from the stuff that makes life really matter: friendship and love.

This is Tommy Wallach's first novel, and it is awesome. (Yes, I really am using that word correctly.) The storytelling is riveting and amazing. The dialogue is real and gritty; it came as no surprise to me that Paramount has *already* optioned the film rights for this book. Best of all is the strong, deep character development. Usually a staunch reader of non-fiction, I am thrilled to have found this book, which kept me awake reading, thinking I *was* on a countdown to the world's end, and if there was one thing I was going to do before we all imploded, it was finish this young adult