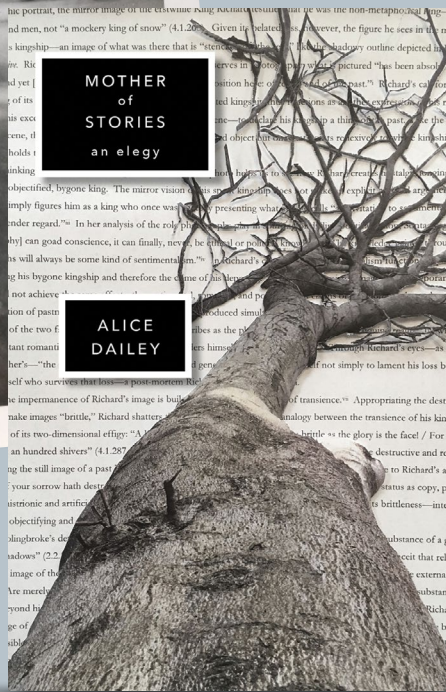




FANCY THYSELF

Turning the Lens Around Is an Art Form



Mother of Stories An Elegy

Alice Dailey, Fordham University Press
(JUL 2) Softcover \$24.95 (160pp)
978-1-5315-0647-6
FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS

Grief, lies, and death haunt Alice Dailey's intense, intimate memoir *Mother of Stories*.

Dailey, a scholar and educator focused on the portrayal of death in historical literature, takes an unusual approach to writing about the effects of ancestral trauma on her life. In a swirling mix of past and present, literature and life, photographs, documents, and snippets of writings, each a weight holding her under waters of conflicting emotions, her narrative recounts her dysfunctional relationship with her mother and how she navigated the months before and after her mother's death.

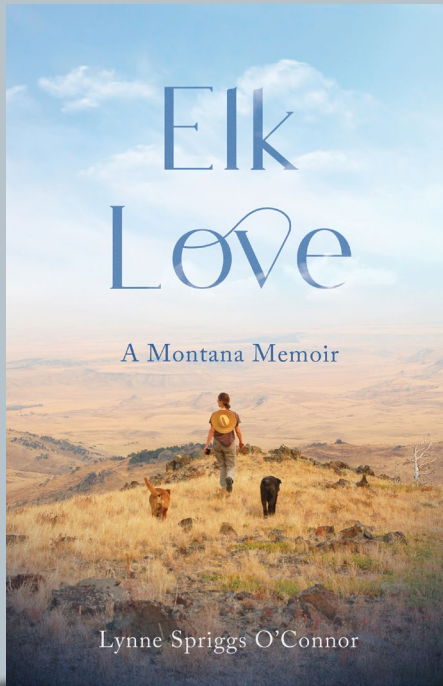
A complex, lyrical work, the book issues a cry of grief—if not the kind that can be soothed by warm memories of the departed. Indeed, the book grieves for love that never was, a fact that her mother denied in words but confirmed in actions. Dailey's mother is remembered as

a “daughter of dysfunction and neglect” and a “pathological liar” whose behaviors, stories, and lies caused her to question her own intuitive knowing and undermined her sense of self. After her mother's death, Dailey discovered a secret that confirmed what she had always intuited: that of all her mother's children, she alone had been unloved.

The book is a moving testament to the power of a story to create or destroy, and to the power of art to make the unbearable livable. Haunted by a legacy of ancestral abuse, Dailey demonstrates both insight and courage: knowing that her ability to create and to thrive depended on confronting a painful truth, she chooses to face it.

Mother of Stories is a memoir that reveals the generational effects of lies and unhealed wounds.

KRISTINE MORRIS



Elk Love A Montana Memoir

Lynne Spriggs O'Connor, She Writes Press (JUN 18) Softcover
\$17.95 (355pp), 978-1-64742-640-8, ADVENTURE

Lynne Spriggs O'Connor's memoir *Elk Love* pays homage to the challenging, beautiful land that brought her deep, enduring love.

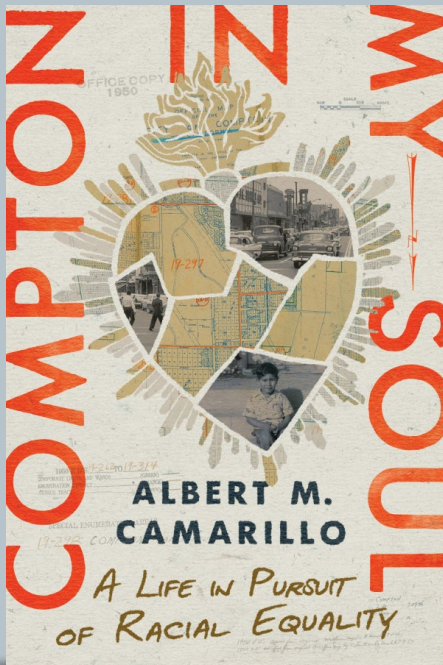
A scholar and museum curator fascinated by Native American art, city-bred O'Connor had visions of Montana as her healing place. Upon moving to rugged Great Falls, though, she faced rough initiations into her new life. Flipping her car on a deserted gravel road, she was left at the mercy of strangers. One of them, Harrison, was a handsome rancher thirteen years her senior, still reeling from the death of his wife five years before.

Because Harrison and O'Connor were wounded souls, they at first kept their distance through verbal thrusts and parries. But sharing the rigors and challenges of ranching bound them not just to the land, but to each other. Eager to learn, O'Connor was initiated into the bloody rites of autumn (the book's descriptions of what it takes to put meat on the table are graphic). Not long after, though sensing an almost mystical connection with the Indigenous people who understood the play of life and death, she gave up hunting.

The prose is gorgeous and detailed, including when it comes to landscape, creatures, and the quirky folks who embraced O'Connor's presence among them. It revels in the elegance of great blue herons and the power of bald eagles; in silver fish leaping to snap caddisflies only to be carried aloft themselves, still wiggling, by swift birds; and in the comforting devotion of domestic animals. In such features, in new love, and in shar-

ing the grief and pride of the Native American artists whose works she exhibited, O'Connor found her healing place.

Elk Love is a memoir about Montana ranching life and finding healing, love, and home through shared challenges and joys with another.



Compton in My Soul A Life in Pursuit of Racial Equality

Albert M. Camarillo, Stanford University Press (JUL 2) Hardcover
\$27 (312pp), 978-1-5036-3819-8

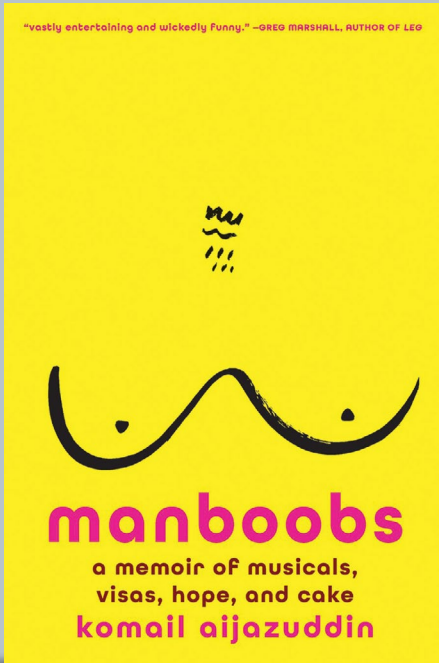
Albert M. Camarillo's warm memoir *Compton in My Soul* traces the source of his ethics and values to a Mexican immigrant barrio in Compton, California, where he learned to envision a better, brighter future. Despite all of the forces working against him, he became an eminent scholar in ethnic studies, a Stanford University professor, an author, and a tireless advocate for equality for all people.

Segregated Compton figures large in the tale. Camarillo's father, at the age of ten, walked 1,800 miles from his home in Michoacán, Mexico, to Compton with his uncle, searching for his farmworker father. The narrative alternates heartwarming stories of family solidarity with heart-rending testimonies of racial injustice. Among the examples of the toll of racial segregation on his family, Camarillo includes the torment that his parents suffered with the accidental burning death of their small daughter, who was denied emergency treatment at the nearest hospital, which at the time only served white people. And by the late 1980s, due to discriminatory government policies against its ethnic populations, Compton had morphed from a small, multiethnic, family-oriented city into America's murder capital; Camarillo is clear when it comes to providing the disturbing explanations for the city's downfall.

Its prose engaging and informative, the book imparts a wealth of information about the effects of segregation and the struggle for racial equality in America. Its stories highlight the importance of family and community solidarity; the pivotal events of the transformative, turbulent 1960s and beyond; and the successful efforts of forward-thinking minority educators to see ethnic studies included among university programs.

By a Mexican American academic who confronted American segregation and prevailed, *Compton in My Soul* is an inspirational memoir.

Images on previous page from Mother of Stories: An Elegy, by Alice Dailey. Used with permission from Fordham University Press. The photographs featured are sourced from the author's personal collection.



Manboobs

A Memoir of Musicals, Visa, Hope, and Cake

Komail Aijazuddin, Abrams Press (AUG 13) Hardcover \$27 (288pp)
978-1-4197-7384-6, LGBTQ+

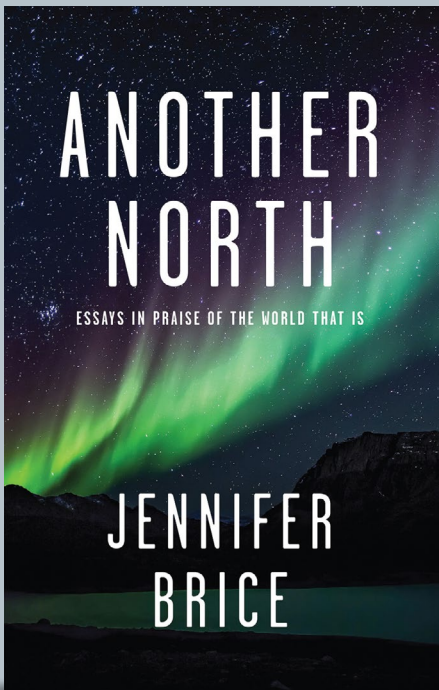
Variously hilarious and despairing, Komail Aijazuddin's memoir covers his struggles for self-acceptance.

As a child, Aijazuddin knew that he was different from other children and that he would suffer because of it. "Gay boys who are unable to hide our gayness from the world are told early and often that there is something inherently wrong with us that needs fixing," he writes. Indeed, a fellow gay student at the Pakistani Academy stood out like "a ballerina on a rugby pitch." Aijazuddin himself, with his exuberant love of American musicals and effeminacy, felt trapped in a body that was shaped like that of an ancient fertility goddess while other boys his age were sprouting facial hair and muscles. Having inherited gynecomastia (enlarged male breasts) only added to his embarrassment and isolation.

The book's descriptions are lively, showing how Aijazuddin took comfort in food and dreams of the United States, both of which later left him disillusioned: the truth about the American dream, he writes, is that "you have to be asleep to believe it." Abroad, he pursued interests in the visual arts and writing and learned to navigate the ecstasies and dangers of gay life. He experienced some culture shock upon arriving in the United States and wept the first time he walked into a Costco. But the social dissonance remained: once called out for not being "Pakistani enough" in Pakistan—

where, Aijazuddin writes, restrictive religiosity is inhaled with a baby's first breath and where privilege, not merit, is the key to survival—Aijazuddin found that he was "too Pakistani" for gay life in the United States too, where the culture had its own rules of engagement.

The candid and sometimes uproarious memoir of a gay Pakistani, *Manboobs* is about the search for acceptance in two radically different, flawed countries—and within oneself.



Another North

Essays

Jennifer Brice, Boreal Books (JUN 25) Softcover \$17.95 (240pp)
978-1-59709-936-3, ESSAYS

Written in her middle age, the essays in Jennifer Brice's memoir *Another North* cover her perspectives on place, selfhood, and life in general.

Alaska, with its massive scale and minus-fifty-degree winter temperatures, molded and shaped Brice, even after life took her elsewhere—to Hamilton, a small town in upstate New York where she learned about the coldness of not fitting in. Brice struggled to find a community of like-minded people in Hamilton, feeling pervasive discomfort—"a little bit like being on Prozac: the highs are not as high, the lows not as low."

These essays infuse memories, objects, and events with meaning. They include philosophical musings on the passage of time and on grieving friends; they cover feelings of ecstasy over the familiarity of Brice's grandmother's lima beans and cream casserole. Place is paramount throughout, mooting the stories. Indeed, places are personified, as though they are capable of responding to Brice's love.

Poetic multisensory descriptions appear throughout the book, as of "Silt rustling like silk underskirts" to evoke the sound of a river's flow and of the "opulent secret" of warm, soft fur worn next to the skin. While the entries progress sans urgency over self-transformation, they also express consistent longings to discover how to fit in without losing one's inner wildness.

As bold as the act of flying a small plane over vast expanses of snow fringed by mountains, *Another North* is a contemplative memoir-in-essays

that muses on whether one's geographical location is a matter of destiny, and what is really meant when one says, "I belong here," or decides, "I don't." ♥