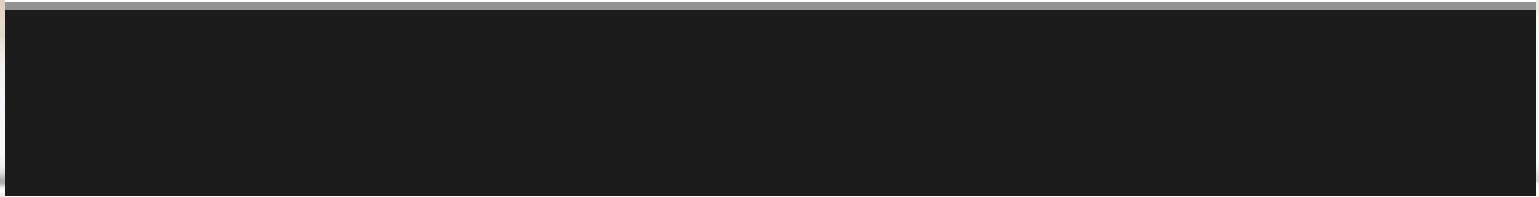
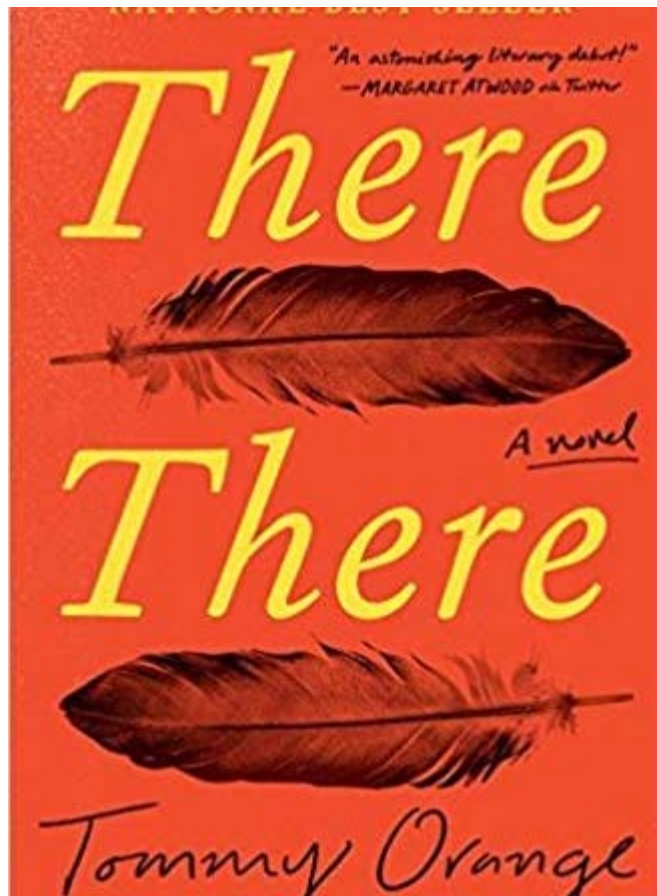


Saturday, February 16, 2019

*Book & Film*  
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FICTION

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## The Best Books Of 2018?

*The New York Times (and Everyone Else) Is Lying to You. But Here Are A Few Titles We Liked Anyway.*

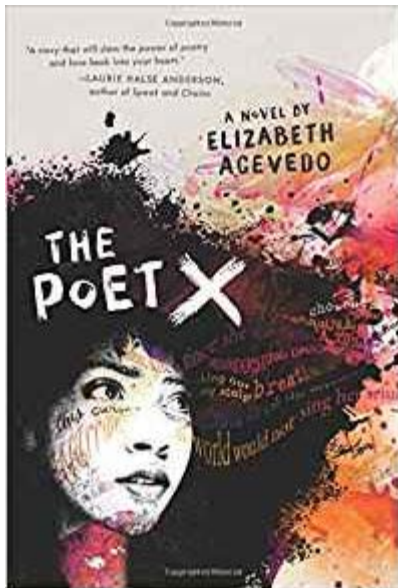
December 12, 2018

Michael Giltz

When the New York Times published its list of the Ten Best Books of 2018, I jumped on it like any avid reader would. Which books made the list? How many had I read? This year, I'd read NONE of them. But I didn't feel shamed by that fact. Why? Because I knew the New York Times was lying. To me. To you. To themselves.

They can't possibly know what the ten best books of 2018 might be because *no one* knows what the ten best books of 2018 truly are. Heck, no one can honestly tell you the ten best mysteries or ten best sports books or even the ten best picture books of the year. Why? Too many damn books.

In North America, literally hundreds of thousands of books are published in English every year. Toss in self-published books and we may be talking about more than a million new books. True, 17% of them are written by James Patterson and his legion of co-authors. Still, that's a lot of books. If they're being honest, most critics will acknowledge they haven't even scratched the surface.

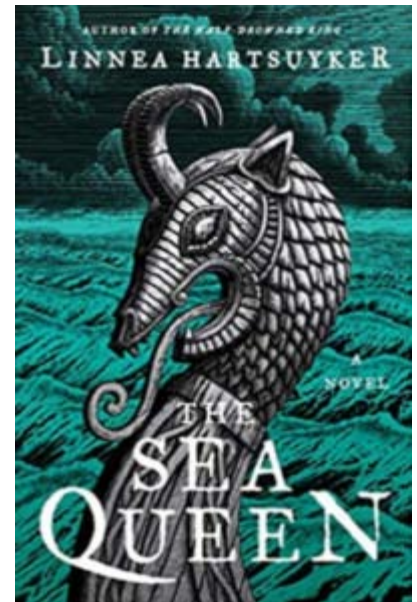


The world of TV criticism has been the most forthright lately, since the explosion in TV content has been so massive and so recent and so good. Again and again, TV critics will explain and apologize and justify and qualify any and every list they make. Then they make a second list of the three dozen shows they've going to watch next.

Music critics are less honest; they still kid themselves that they've heard everything that matters. Now if you're a film critic, you actually *can* see every single movie that gets a one week theatrical run in New York City each year. You just have to watch about three movies a day. Broadway? Piece of cake! Toss in Off Broadway and you're already out of luck. It can't be done.

So be honest, NYT—those ten books are a list of the best books of the year...out of all the books (some of) you actually read. Still, the list is life and in this over-saturated world of content, a good list is like a good friend, someone who can direct your attention and save you time.

If I can direct your attention, one of my favorite books of the year that isn't popping up on a lot of other lists is *The Sea Queen* by Linnea Hartsuyker. It's book two in a brutal, compelling Viking saga that features schemers as thrillingly strategic as Thomas Cromwell in *Wolf Hall* or anyone in *Game of Thrones*, but with less access to dragons. Toss in some of the best female characters of the year (women who hold their own with the men have center stage here) and you get a great work of historical fiction. Book three in the trilogy can't come soon enough. But you'll have to start with book one: *The Half-Drowned King*.



The National Book Awards sent me to the young adult novel *The Poet X* by Elizabeth Acevedo. It ticks so many boxes that YA novels tend to tick these days: person of color, non-privileged world, faith (questioning, but still respectful), sexual confusion and mixed-race dating, which doesn't even count anymore as a box to tick for young people. As a bonus, Acevedo wrote the novel in free verse, with each chapter its own stand-alone vivid piece of writing. All of it combines into a rich story that ends in a very happy moment, not a given by any stretch in YA, but one that's well-earned.

The New York Times sent me to the "urban Indian" novel of Tommy Orange, a rudely reductionist label for a rich work called *There There*. Orange's remarkable debut is smart enough to put the quote by Gertrude Stein (referred to in the title) into context while telling the painful, honest, angry, funny, wrenching and toss-in-your-own-adjective story of people who converge at a powwow in California. It's multi-layered, unsparring and humane. I'm very glad I read it.

That's three more books down from 2018...and 999,997 to go.

Tags: best books 2018, Elizabeth Acevedo, James Patterson, Linnea Hartsuyker, New York Times, The Poet X, The Sea Queen, There There, Tommy Orange

← Breakdancing Badass Muslim-American Girl In Love

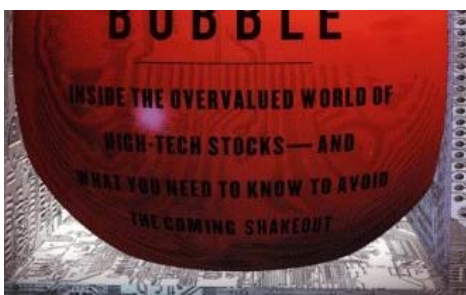
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## Michael Giltz

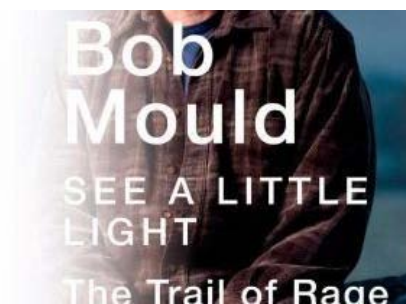
Michael Giltz is a freelance writer based in New York City covering all areas of entertainment, politics, sports and more. He has written extensively for many outlets, such as New York Post, New York Daily News, New York Magazine, The Advocate, Out, Huffington Post, Premiere Magazine, Entertainment Weekly, BookFilter, USA Today and the Los Angeles Times. He's co-host of the long-running podcast Showbiz Sandbox.

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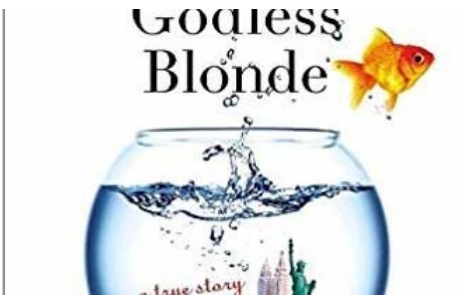
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## One thought on “The Best Books Of 2018?”

Pingback: [The Golden Wolf Cover reveal! \(And some end-of-year news\)](#) – Linnea Hartsuyker

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