

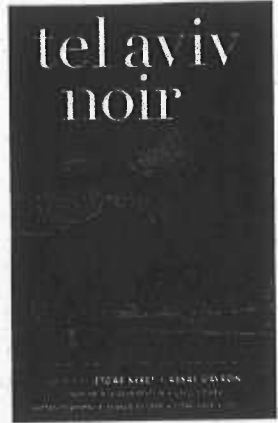


Oria

Tel Aviv Stories

Oria, Shelly. New York 1, Tel Aviv O. Farrar. Nov. 2014. 208p. ISBN 9780374534578. pap. \$14; ebk. ISBN 9780374711757. f

Born in Los Angeles and raised in Israel, Oria gives her first story collection a sharp edge, subtle humor, and a distinctive contemporary voice. One of the strongest pieces, "The Thing About Sophia," is told by a cast-off girlfriend of a charming female narcissist. The title is repeated like a mantra, so that the reader learns at least ten things about Sophia that make her both difficult and alluring and sees the speaker's escalating anger and regret as each item is added to the list. Like many contemporary writers, Oria offers an important perspective on coinciding cultures and languages, examining the rifts between children and parents separated by an ocean ("The Disneyland of Albany") and the displacements of characters who move quickly from mandatory military service in Israel to *la vie bohème* in lower Manhattan. Sometimes we even see those rifts and ruptures beginning to heal. **VERDICT** An engaging first story collection from



a promising young author who deserves a wide readership.—Sue Russell, Bryn Mawr, PA

★Tel Aviv Noir. Akashic. (Noir). Oct. 2014. 285p. ed. by Etgar Keret & Assaf Gavron. ISBN 9781617753152. \$26.95; pap. ISBN 9781617751547. \$15.95; ebk. ISBN 9781617753350. f

Since the start, Akashic's short story series has been a classy enterprise, specializing in crime noir set in specific locations. The 66th volume may be the very best in a generally solid series. Edited by noted Israeli writers Keret (*Suddenly, A Knock at the Door*) and Gavron (*Almost Dead*), this collection runs the gamut from Lavie Tidhar's fantasy of a detective who works

in parallel worlds ("The Time-Slip Detective") to Matan Hermoni's "Women" about a writer who inherits a ghost and Deakla Keydar's touching story ("Slow Cooking") of an abandoned wife who finds purpose aiding African refugees who are worse off than she is. Shimon Adaf's gnomic contribution, "My Father's Kingdom," is only nominally a detective tale. In it, a student becomes obsessed with the esoteric poems of a poet who committed suicide. It reads like Franz Kafka filtered through Jorge Louis Borges. Antonio Ungar's "Säid the Good" tells a remorselessly unsentimental account of star-crossed lovers, vengeance, and death, and in the most conventional offering, Assaf Gavron's "Center," a PI tracks down a missing person by following the trail of his severed parts. **VERDICT** This collection escapes the limits of formula fiction and sets the bar high for subsequent "Noir" offerings. The genre is hot, Tel Aviv is exotic, and this volume is outstanding. What's not to like? [Scribner is publishing Gavron's Bernstein Award-winning *The Hilltop* in October.—Ed.]—David Keymer, Modesto, CA

is drawn to the secretive Mattia, and they fall in love, but later she learns that she is not the only person living in limbo, waiting for a new chapter in her life to begin. **VERDICT** With exceptional writing and a masterly grasp of storytelling, Mazzucco offers such a realistic portrayal of the war in Afghanistan and its aftermath that you would bet he was actually there, living through it all. An excellent translation, too. [For another take on the Italian experience in Afghanistan, see also Paolo Giordano's *The Human Body*, p. 92.]—Lisa Rohrbaugh, Leetonia Community P.L., OH

Moyes, Jojo. *Silver Bay*. Penguin. 2014. 338p. ISBN 9780143126485. pap. \$16; ebk. ISBN 9780698156357. f
Silver Bay is a tiny Australian coastal town, where the main industry is whale watching. Liza McCullen has moved home to her Aunt Kathleen's Silver Bay Hotel, bringing her ten-year-old daughter with her. Despite the close-knit community, Liza remains intensely private. It all stems from a mysterious trauma she suffered in England years before. Into their circumscribed world comes Mike Dormer, hotshot

London developer. His intent is to set up a luxury resort complete with water sports, but as he explores the site without telling anyone who he is, he comes to realize that he's falling in love with Liza. When the locals get wind of a development, Mike also learns of the negative effect it would have on the whales and dolphins in the bay. **VERDICT** This 2007 novel, now available in the United States, is more traditionally romantic than Moyes's newer work. Fans of her recent blockbuster *Me Before You* may find this book less powerfully engaging. Its strengths lie in the author's apt characterizations and evocation of place. It will likely be of interest to Moyes fans and those who enjoy a solid romance.—Melanie Kindrachuk, Stratford P.L., Ont.

Must, Dennis. *Hush Now, Don't Explain. Coffetown*. Oct. 2014. 287p. ISBN 9781603812016. pap. \$14.95; ebk. ISBN 9781603812023. f
Set in a small Ohio town after World War II, this coming-of-age tale by Must (*Oh, Don't Ask Why*) features two main characters. Honor is an orphan who comes to Miss Alsada's boarding house in Deforest Junction, where her mother had once been a guest, searching for clues about her parentage. Billy, Miss Alsada's son, is a mixed-race teenager and budding piano player looking for the father he never knew. Neighbors in Deforest Junction include Mr. Willard, the owner of a shanty store, who regales the children with stories of his adventures—none of which is true. And for one brief but critical moment, there's Buster Stanley, a blues pianist whom Billy comes to believe is his father. Following a racial incident, Honor and Billy leave town, accompanied by Mr. Willard, on a quest to find Stanley. Their adventures will take them to West Virginia and New York City, and, finally, on a tumultuous journey to New Orleans, where Billy will seek his artistic voice and Honor something of her past. **VERDICT** Steeped in the strains of postwar jazz and the lonely sound of train whistles in the night, this is a gritty, evocative novel of identity, race, and a particularly American kind of yearning.—Lawrence Rungren, Andover, MA

Noxon, Christopher. *Plus One*. Prospect Park. Jan. 2015. 294p. ISBN 9781938849428. \$25.95; ebk. ISBN 9781938849435. f
This comic debut novel by a Los Angeles-based journalist Noxon (*Rejuvenile*) revolves around a Hollywood self-identified misfit family. Alex Sherman-Zicklin (he's the Sherman; wife Figgy is the Zicklin) is quickly becoming the shadow man to Figgy's Emmy Award-winning writing ca-