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Both George Orwell and Winston Churchill came close to death in the mid-1930’s—Orwell shot in the neck in a trench line in the Spanish Civil War, and Churchill struck by a car in New York City. If they’d died then, history would scarcely remember them. At the time, Churchill was a politician on the outs, his loyalty to his class and party suspect. Orwell was a mildly successful novelist, to put it generously. No one would have predicted that by the end of the 20th century they would be considered two of the most important people in British history for having the vision and courage to campaign tirelessly, in words and in deeds, against the totalitarian threat from both the left and the right. Together, to an extent not sufficiently appreciated, they kept the West’s compass set toward freedom as its due north.

It’s not easy to recall now how lonely a position both men once occupied. By the late 1930’s, democracy was discredited in many circles, and authoritarian rulers were everywhere in the ascent. There were some who decried the scourge of communism, but saw in Hitler and Mussolini “men we could do business with,” if not in fact saviors. And there were others who saw the Nazi and fascist threat as malign, but tended to view communism as the path to salvation. Churchill and Orwell, on the other hand, had the foresight to see clearly that the issue was human freedom—that whatever its coloration, a government that denied its people basic freedoms was a totalitarian menace and had to be resisted.

In the end, Churchill and Orwell proved their age’s necessary men. The glorious climax of Churchill and Orwell is the work they both did in the decade of the 1940’s to triumph over freedom’s enemies. And though Churchill played the larger role in the defeat of Hitler and the Axis, Orwell’s reckoning with the menace of authoritarian rule in Animal Farm and 1984 would define the stakes of the Cold War for its 50-year course, and continues to give inspiration to fighters for freedom to this day. Taken together, in Thomas E. Ricks’s masterful hands, their lives are a beautiful testament to the power of moral conviction, and to the courage it can take to stay true to it, through thick and thin.

THOMAS E. RICKS is an adviser on national security at the New America Foundation, where he participates in its “Future of War” project. He was previously a fellow at the Center for a New American Security and is a contributing editor of Foreign Policy magazine, for which he writes the prizewinning blog The Best Defense. A member of two Pulitzer Prize-winning teams, he covered U.S. military activities in Somalia, Haiti, Korea, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Kuwait, Turkey, Afghanistan, and Iraq. He is the author of several books, including The Generals, The Gamble, and the number one New York Times bestseller Fiasco, which was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize.
Over 90% of the world’s trade is conveyed by ship; the oceans are truly the planet’s circulatory system, and the home of some of its most ominous geopolitical flashpoints. But few of us truly appreciate the importance of the world’s seas, throughout history and in the present moment. One who does, profoundly, is Admiral Jim G. Stavridis, one of the most decorated naval officers of our time and the only admiral ever to be named commander of NATO. In Sea Power, Stavridis has distilled a phenomenal amount of knowledge and wisdom about the seas into a fascinating reckoning with their importance to the human story—and to America’s vital national interests today.

Stavridis puts us at the helm of a US Navy ship, navigating the geography of each body of water, so that we understand how its nature is in a real sense our destiny. And then he brings to bear stories both from his own career and from the long history—military, diplomatic and economic—of humanity’s navigation of these waters. Sea Power is marvelous naval history, giving us fresh and exciting reckonings with the great naval engagements that shaped the destiny of nations, from the Athenians and the Persians to Lord Nelson against the French at Trafalgar; through to the cat and mouse game between U.S. and Soviet subs in the Cold War, and the current bellicosities in the South China Sea, perhaps the site of the world’s next great naval battle. Stavridis also steps back to assess some of the plagues to our oceans that are best seen holistically, from piracy to pollution to global warming.

When most people look at a map of the world, they see it as the outlines of its continents. When you read Sea Power, you’ll never make that mistake again—you will instead be drawn first to the shapes of its great bodies of water, and their fateful consequences, for our history, for our present and for our future. It’s a book only Admiral Jim Stavridis could have written, and it is a masterpiece.

ADM. JIM STAVRIDIS, USN (RET.) is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy who spent over 35 years on active service in the Navy. He commanded destroyers and a carrier strike group in combat and served for seven years as a four-star admiral, including nearly four years as the first Navy officer chosen as Supreme Allied Commander for Global Operations at NATO. After retiring from the Navy he was named the dean of The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University in 2013. He has written articles on global security issues for The New York Times, The Washington Post, and The Atlantic.
A quarter of a century since Thelma & Louise turned Hollywood on its head, breaking all the rules about the place of women in cinema, Becky Aikman shines a light on the brazen group of young actors, writers, and filmmakers who created a classic—but have things actually progressed since then?

When a 30-year-old production assistant, Callie Khouri, had the wild idea to write a movie unlike any she had ever seen, about outlaw women on the run fleeing dull and disenchanted lives, the obstacles were almost too numerous to overcome. The bleak reality of Hollywood was that women screenwriters and filmmakers were practically unheard of in the 1980s, and movies about women were just as rare. Frustrated, intelligent, and full of thwarted talent, Khouri persisted, and today, Thelma & Louise, for which Khouri became the first woman writing on her own to receive an Oscar for best original screenplay since 1932, continues to electrify audiences and remains a cultural statement of defiance. In Off the Cliff, Becky Aikman tells the extraordinary story behind this cinematic masterpiece, which crashed through barriers and upended traditional Hollywood.

Drawing on over 150 exclusive interviews with stars Geena Davis and Susan Sarandon, director Ridley Scott, actors, studio bosses, producers, as well as a huge cast of lesser-known characters who pushed for the film to be made, Aikman crafts an exhilarating narrative driven by vivid personalities, from the old-school studio chief Alan Ladd Jr. to a newcomer named Brad Pitt. More importantly, backed with groundbreaking social and cultural commentary, she shines a light on the current state of the film industry. Aikman examines how women’s participation in film has made little progress since Thelma & Louise marked a high point, and why audiences of women and girls still rarely get to view themselves portrayed as persons of consequence and agency on the silver screen.

Off the Cliff is a deeply-researched story of success in the face of challenging hurdles—but a success which somehow failed to shift the film industry towards more female-driven films. Aikman looks at how the struggle for women’s voices to be heard in Hollywood that a bold team of filmmakers faced 25 years ago still looms today and shows what we can learn from one of the rare moments when the movies got it right.

BECKY AIKMAN is the author of the memoir Saturday Night Widows: The Adventures of Six Friends Remaking Their Lives. She was a writer and editor for Business Week and a reporter for Newsday. Aikman lives in New York City.
Lakota Oglala Sioux Nation, South Dakota. Two Native American cousins, Rick Overlooking Horse and You Choose Watson, though bound by blood and by land, find themselves at odds as they grapple with the implications of their shared heritage. When escalating anger towards the injustices, historical and current, inflicted upon the Lakota people by the federal government leads to tribal divisions and infighting, the cousins go in separate directions: Rick chooses the path of peace; You Choose, violence.

Years pass, and as You Choose serves time in prison, Rick finds himself raising twin baby boys, orphaned at birth, in his meadow. As the twins mature from infants to young men, Rick immerses the boys within their ancestry, telling wonderful and terrible tales of how the whole world came to be, and affirming their place in the universe as the result of all who have come before and will come behind. But when You Choose returns to the reservation after three decades behind bars, his anger manifests, forever disrupting the lives of Rick and the boys.

A complex tale that spans generations and geography, Quiet Until the Thaw conjures with the implications of an oppressed history, how we are bound not just to immediate family but to all who have come before and will come after us, and, most of all, to the notion that everything was always, and is always, connected. As Fuller writes, “The belief that we can be done with our past is a myth. The past is nudging at us constantly.”

ALEXANDRA FULLER was born in England in 1969. In 1972, she moved with her family to a farm in southern Africa. She lived in Africa until her mid twenties. In 1994, she moved to Wyoming.
In its earliest days, the Internet seemed to all of us to be an unqualified good: It was a way to share information, increase productivity, and experience new freedoms and diversions. Alexander Klimburg was a member of the idealistic generation that came of age with the Internet. Two decades later, he—and all of us—have been forced to confront the reality that an invention that was once a utopian symbol of connection has evolved into an unprecedented weapon and means of domination. Cyberspace, Klimburg contends, is already the main stage for global confrontation for this century. In this new arena of conflict, brilliant individuals and informal networks have the capacity to bring ostensibly stable societies to their knees—but also save them from destruction—and nations are reconceiving information as the ultimate weapon and configuring their defenses accordingly. The debate about how individual nations and the global community alike will define this new domain of human interaction is more pressing and divisive than ever.

Klimburg is a leading voice in the international dialogue on the implications of this new foreign policy sphere, and in The Darkening Web, he presents the urgent reality that we are vastly underestimating the far-reaching consequences of states' aspirations to project power in cyberspace. Indeed, competition for cyber power is a development as complex and troubling as the advent of nuclear weapons during the Cold War—and quite possibly as dangerous for humanity as a whole. With a skillful blend of anecdote and argument, Klimburg brings us face to face with the range of threats the struggle for cyberspace presents, from an apocalyptic scenario of debilitated civilian infrastructure to a 1984-like authoritarian erosion of privacy and freedom of expression. With a specific focus on the United States on one side and Russia and China on the other, The Darkening Web makes clear that the debate about our different aspirations for cyberspace is nothing short of a war over our global values.

Authoritative, thought-provoking, and compellingly argued, The Darkening Web reveals the menacing possibilities of a twenty-first century dominated by information warfare—and explains how the original promise of the Internet as a means for advancing freedoms can be regained.

ALEXANDER KLIMBURG is a program director at The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, a nonresident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, and an associate and former fellow at the Belfer Center of the Harvard Kennedy School. He has acted as an advisor to a number of governments and international organizations on cybersecurity strategy and internet governance, and has participated in various national, international, NATO and EU policy groups. He splits his time between Boston, Vienna and The Hague.
Stella Krakus, a curator at Manhattan’s renowned Central Museum of Art, is having the roughest week in approximately ever. Her soon-to-be ex-husband (the perfectly awful Whit Ghiscolmbe) is stalking her, a workplace romance with “a fascinating, hyper-rational narcissist” is in freefall, and a beloved colleague, Paul, has gone missing. Strange things are afoot: CeMArt’s current exhibit is sponsored by a Belgian multinational that wants to take over the world’s water supply, she unwittingly stars in a viral video that’s making the rounds, and her mother–the imperious, impossibly glamorous Caro–wants to have lunch. It’s almost more than she can overanalyze.

But the appearance of a mysterious map, depicting a 19th-century utopian settlement, sends Stella—a dogged expert in American graphics and fluidomanie (don’t ask)—on an all-consuming research mission. As she teases out the links between a haunting poem, several unusual novels, a counterfeiting scheme, and one of the museum’s colorful early benefactors, she discovers the unbearable secret that Paul’s been keeping, and charts a course out of the chaos of her own life. Pulsing with neurotic humor and dagger-sharp prose, Impossible Views of the World is a dazzling debut novel about how to make it through your early thirties with your brain and heart intact.

LUCY IVES is the author of several books of poetry and short prose, including Anamnesis, a long poem that won the Slope Book Prize, and the novella nineties. Her writing has appeared in Bomb, Artforum, n+1, Conjunctions, and the Los Angeles Review of Books, and at newyorker.com. For five years she was an editor with Triple Canopy, the Brooklyn-based online magazine. A graduate of Harvard and the Iowa Writers’ Workshop, she is completing a Ph.D. in comparative literature at NYU.
You know there’s good blood and bad blood, don’t you? That bad blood there, it’s good that it’s coming out. You’ve got to let it out, because then your body will make more of the good blood, the clean sort that runs through the inside.

A young man wakes up at dawn to drive to the Andes, to climb the Cerro Bonete with a friend, a mountain untouched by ice axes and climbers, one of the planet’s final mountains to be conquered—a planned feat of heroic bravado, or foolishness. But instead of meeting his friend, he finds himself dragged, by the undertow of memory, to Esplanada, the neighborhood he grew up in, to the brotherhood of his old friends, and to the clearing in the woods where he witnessed an act that has run like a scar through the rest of his life.

Back in Esplanada, the young man revisits his initiation into adulthood and recalls his boyhood friends who formed a strange and volatile pack. Despite his shyness and his vulnerability, the boy—known to his friends as Horse Hands—sees himself as the hero in an epic story. In his mind, reality is just a brief pause in a life where fantasy is the norm. On a soccer field, a collision between the boy and the neighborhood thug leads to a standoff which evolves into an unlikely friendship defined by fear and loyalty. Together with the other kids of Esplanada, they play video games, get drunk around bonfires, pick fights, and goad each other into bike races where the winner is the boy who has the most spectacular crash. Caught between the threat of not being man enough, the desire to please his friends, and the intoxicating contact-high of danger, Horse Hands finds himself following the rules of the pack, even as the risks mount. And in a moment that reverberates and repeats itself in new ways in his adulthood, his fantasies of who he is and what it means to be a man come crashing down, and life asserts itself as an endless rehearsal for a heroic moment that may never arrive.

From one of Brazil’s most dazzling writers, The Shape of Bones is an exhilarating story of mythic power. Daniel Galera has written a pulse-racing novel with the otherworldly wisdom of a parable.