

8 ANTHONY DOERR on Coetzee,
Ruefle, Pynchon, Mantel and more

12 CHARLES JOHNSON on William
Styron's collected nonfiction

15 AMANDA FOREMAN on Helen
Castor's 'Joan of Arc: A History'

23 'INDEPENDENCE LOST' Lives on
the Edge of the American Revolution

Book Review

The New York Times

JULY 5, 2015 \$2



Fiction

- 10 THE TRUTH AND OTHER LIES**
By Sascha Arango
Reviewed by Joseph Finder
- 13 BOOK OF NUMBERS**
By Joshua Cohen
Reviewed by Mark Sarvas
- 16 VALLEY FEVER**
By Katherine Taylor
Reviewed by Emily Bobrow
- 16 LIFE #6**
By Diana Wagman
Reviewed by Amanda Stern
- 18 A LADY OF GOOD FAMILY**
By Jeanne Mackin
Reviewed by Joanna Rakoff



- 18 THE BODY WHERE I WAS BORN**
By Guadalupe Nettel
Reviewed by Amy Rowland
- 29 Crime**
By Marilyn Stasio

Nonfiction

- 1 BY THE PEOPLE**
Rebuilding Liberty Without Permission
By Charles Murray
- WAGES OF REBELLION**
By Chris Hedges
Reviewed by George Packer



- 11 SKYFARING**
A Journey With a Pilot
By Mark Vanhoenacker
Reviewed by Tom Zoellner
- 12 MY GENERATION**
Collected Nonfiction
By William Styron
Reviewed by Charles Johnson
- 14 SOMETHING MUST BE DONE ABOUT PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY**
A Family, a Virginia Town, a Civil Rights Battle
By Kristen Green
Reviewed by Thomas J. Sugrue
- 15 JOAN OF ARC**
A History
By Helen Castor
Reviewed by Amanda Foreman



- 17 DIGITAL GOLD**
Bitcoin and the Inside Story of the Misfits and Millionaires Trying to Reinvent Money
By Nathaniel Popper
Reviewed by Bethany McLean
- 19 THE FULL CATASTROPHE**
Travels Among the New Greek Ruins
By James Angelos
Reviewed by Joshua Hammer

- 20 IN A DARK WOOD**
What Dante Taught Me About Grief, Healing, and the Mysteries of Love
By Joseph Luzzi
Reviewed by Paul Elie
- 21 THE SEVEN GOOD YEARS**
A Memoir
By Etgar Keret
Reviewed by Adam Wilson
- 21 IRREPRESSIBLE**
The Jazz Age Life of Henrietta Bingham
By Emily Bingham
Reviewed by Miranda Purves
- 23 INDEPENDENCE LOST**
Lives on the Edge of the American Revolution
By Kathleen DuVal
Reviewed by Woody Holton
- 30 The Shortlist**
Americana
By Paula Uruburu

Features

- 8 By the Book**
Anthony Doerr
- 31 Bookends**
Is it true that genre labels don't really matter anymore?
By Dana Stevens and Leslie Jamison

Etc.

- 4** Open Book
- 6** Letters
- 24** Best-Seller Lists
- 26** Editors' Choice
- 26** TBR: Inside the List
- 28** Paperback Row

A RO RETU

NATIONAL B
PRIN
LEST
THE VAMPIRE C
AN
RIC

“Bloody ma
—Time

“Rice allows [he
to do what they
wreak havoc a
terror. All
impeccably d

—The Washing

“The thinking
vampire story...
a house on

—Bookreporter

NOW IN PAPER
AND EBOOK

f AnneRiceFanPage

ANCHOR B

What's Bugging Me

A woman's harrowing girlhood, as told to her analyst.

By **AMY ROWLAND**

THE GIRL AT THE HEART of Guadalupe Nettel's novel has a peculiar problem. She is a cockroach. At least her mother refers to her this way, as when she castigates her posture: "Cucaracha!" she yells. "Stand up straight!" Adding insult to insecthood, a birthmark on the child's right cornea limits her vision. In order to strengthen the extraocular muscles, she must wear a flesh-hued cloth over her good eye. She resists putting it on each morning, but once it is secured, she submits to being "a patched child" until 5 o'clock, when she is allowed to remove it.

This tension between resistance and resignation is central to "The Body Where I Was Born." Nettel, an award-winning Mexican writer, has called this book "an autobiographical novel, a memoir. . . . Everything I relate therein

was something inaccessible to me, how could I accept other people's versions of it — those who branded me a liar, insolent, and churlish little-old-lady killer?"

Then something even more eerie occurs; a sort of mirror image that Nettel extends from the animal to the human. One night when standing by her bedroom window watching the street through the curtains, she sees a girl, Ximena, in the opposite apartment building doing the same thing. The girls never speak, but develop a nightly ritual: They face each other in silent companionship, in communication "so profound that it surpassed spatial and temporal limits."

One of the fascinating qualities of this book is the unsparing testimony, somewhere between religious confession and secular disclosure, that gives a sharp sense of a woman's harrowing girlhood. Nettel's candid, unaffected prose hews closely to the strictures of the thera-

THE BODY WHERE I WAS BORN

By **Guadalupe Nettel**

Translated by J.T. Lichtenstein

175 pp. Seven Stories Press. \$22.95.

is true, supposing that such a thing as truth really exists." Unlike the brooding narrators of memoiristic fiction by Karl Ove Knausgaard and Ben Lerner, Nettel creates a spare record of her unusual childhood. Through conversations with a (silent) psychoanalyst, she chronicles her parents' separation; her brief time at a commune; her "experimental education" in Mexico City and southern France; her father's imprisonment; and her fraught relationship with her mother, who moves to France to work on a doctorate, leaving Nettel in her grandmother's care.

During this "grim and confusing" time, the narrator becomes quiet and gloomy, and takes refuge in books. She reads "The Metamorphosis" and identifies with her fellow cockroach Gregor Samsa: "He had turned into one; I was one by maternal decree, if not by birth."

Not only does she identify with insects, she has visions of them. In her shoe, she finds a "hairy caterpillar of a light, bright green." Adults accuse her of lying for attention, but she begins to see creepy-crawlies all around: red spiders, praying mantises, "but never a butterfly nor cricket, only much rarer bugs that would appear suddenly and make me scream." Her exasperated grandmother locks her in a room, where she can hear family members disparage her and her mother. So at a young age, she begins to doubt her sanity. "If I couldn't count on myself, who could I count on? If the truth



CECILIA RUIZ

py session. In this, she runs the risk of turning her story into a "case." We're listening to a voice tell of the speaker's childhood, often with metaphor in place of reflection. This disembodiment may be a self-protective tactic or a contrast to the novel's embodiment theme. (She's a visually impaired writer; she's a bug.) But the as-told-to device is frustrating, despite the laudable attempt at self-revelation. Still, Nettel's strategy yields rich rewards. Concealing the adult narrator disturbs the distance between reader and author; the intimacy forces the reader into the girl's vulnerable body. This vivid image of the ardent girl as revealed by a faceless woman hints at the tangled snare of the past. An effort to shed an old self may simply make a person disappear. □

AMY ROWLAND is the author of the novel "The Transcriptionist" and a former editor at the Book Review.