

Tuesday New Release Day: Starring Keefe, Beagin, Welsh, and More

Thomas Beckwith

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Here's a quick look at some notable books—new titles from the likes of **Patrick Radden Keefe**, **Jen Beagin**, **Irvine Welsh** and more—that are publishing this week.

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Vacuum in the Dark by **Jen Beagin**



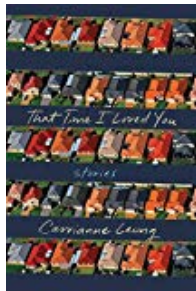
Here's what *Publishers Weekly* [had to say](#) about *Vacuum in the Dark*: “Beagin’s sharp and superb novel finds Mona, from previous novel *Pretend I’m Dead*, now 26, living in Taos, N.Mex., having followed the dying wishes of her ex-boyfriend, a man she met at a needle exchange and called Mr. Disgusting. Mona cleans houses for a living, shares a ranch house with an older married couple she calls Yoko and Yoko, and claims *Fresh Air*’s **Terry Gross** as an imaginary friend-slash-therapist. Prone to falling in love with her clients’ furniture and taking advantage of their absences to create a series of photographic portraits in their homes, Mona often breaches the professional distance between her and her clients. There’s the beautiful and blind therapist Rose, who has given Mona leave to conduct an affair with her husband, whom Mona has nicknamed Dark, and there’s Hungarian artists Lena and Paul, who ask Mona to model for them. Deadpan and savage, Mona has a dark and complicated history she is not afraid to weaponize. When Mona’s mother asks Mona to return to the apartment where she grew up in L.A., Mona must come to terms both with her difficult past and where she can go from here. Beagin pulls no punches—this novel is viciously smart and morbidly funny.”

Dead Men’s Trousers by **Irvine Welsh**

IRVINE WELSH

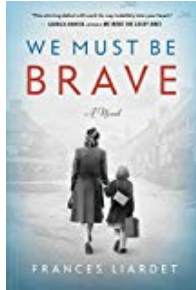
Edinburgh, roped into an appropriately bizarre and macabre organ harvesting caper. Told from the perspectives of the four protagonists, the novel rolls slowly in the first half, updating their individual biographies separately—readers new to Welsh’s world need not be apprehensive—and setting up the brisker, and inevitably bollixed, execution of the theft plot. Two of these former reprobate mates have successfully escaped their pasts. Renton travels the globe as a music manager. Begbie, who runs into Renton on a plane in the opening chapter, is a successful artist living in California. Spud, whose narrative is most steeped in a slangy Scottish dialect, still lives on the edge and instigates the kidney-napping caper. Sick Boy, like Spud, is still in Edinburgh, and crashing with his sister, Carlotta, who screamingly blames him for the degeneration of her son, Ross, and husband, Euan, apparently on a debauched trip to Thailand. When the four finally get together, much comic mileage is wrung in rehashing old grievances. Not surprisingly, the crime unfolds like a Keystone Kops version of *Ocean’s 11*, but with an irrevocable final result. Welsh’s entire oeuvre crackles with idiomatic energy and brio, and this rollicking novel is no different.”

That Time I Loved You by **Carrianne Leung**



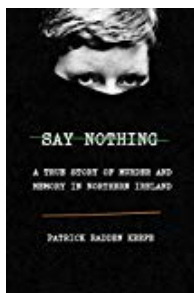
Here’s what *Publishers Weekly* [had to say](#) about *That Time I Loved You*: “Leung (*The Wondrous Woo*) presents 10 sweet, sad, sympathetic stories set in Scarborough, Ontario, for a group portrait of immigrants, misfits, adults, adolescents, and teenagers, all of whom discover suburban comfort does not ensure happiness. The first story, ‘Grass,’ takes place in 1979, as 11-year-olds June and Josie ponder two suicides: Mr. Finley, the local softball coach, and Mrs. Da Silva, a housewife with an abusive husband. The girls cannot ask their parents for explanations, because death is one of many subjects parents prefer not to discuss with children. ‘Flowers’ shows Mrs. Da Silva’s last day, as she listens to flowers taunt her in her native Portuguese. In ‘Treasure,’ a woman named Marilyn who is admired by her neighbors turns out to be a thief. In ‘Sweets,’ June’s buddy Naveen gets beaten up when he wears his sister’s heart-shaped sunglasses to school. In ‘Things,’ comic book enthusiast Darren confronts a racist schoolteacher. ‘Wheels,’ ‘Kiss,’ and the title story explore June and Josie’s changing perspectives upon their first experiences of womanhood. Linked by recurring characters such as Darren’s Jamaican mother and June’s grandmother from Hong Kong, together the stories track June’s deepening understanding of the place she calls home. Crystalline prose, sharp

We Must Be Brave by **Frances Liardet**



Here's what *Publishers Weekly* had to say about *We Must Be Brave*: “British author and translator Liardet’s moving American debut, set in WWII England, follows a childless woman discovering joy after she begins caring for a young girl. Ellen Parr is married to Selwyn, owner of the local mill in the village of Upton, near Southampton. In 1940, while helping evacuees of a nearby bombing who have arrived at Upton by bus, Ellen meets Pamela Pickering, a young child left alone on the bus. Ellen treats Pamela as the daughter she never had (Selwyn is impotent) for the next few years, until Pamela is eight and a relative of Pamela’s finds her and takes her to live with family members. Though distraught by Pamela’s departure, Ellen survives the devastation around her with the love and support of Selwyn, her childhood friend Lucy Horne, and other villagers who have been a constant presence in Ellen’s life. Over 30 years later, Ellen befriends Penny Lacey, a lonely young boarding school student in Upton. Ellen glimpses similarities between Pamela and Penny, and they form a life-changing friendship. Readers will be captivated by Ellen’s story, which is bolstered by a swift plot and characters who realistically and memorably grow.”

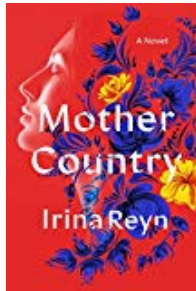
Say Nothing by **Patrick Radden Keefe**



Here's what *Publishers Weekly* had to say about *Say Nothing*: “*New Yorker* staff writer Keefe (*Snakehead*) incorporates a real-life whodunit into a moving, accessible account of the violence that has afflicted Northern Ireland. The mystery concerns **Jean McConville**, a widowed mother of 10, who was snatched from her Belfast home by an IRA gang in 1972. While Keefe touches on historical antecedents, his real starting point is the 1960s, when advocates of a unified Ireland attempted to emulate the nonviolent methods of the American civil rights movement. The path from peaceful protests to terrorist bombings is framed by the story of

his order for being an informer to the British—and the author’s dogged detective work enables him to plausibly name those who literally pulled the trigger. Tinged with immense sadness, this work never loses sight of the humanity of even those who committed horrible acts in support of what they believed in.”

Mother Country by **Irina Reyn**



Here’s what *Publishers Weekly* [had to say](#) about *Mother Country*: “In Reyn’s excellent exploration of the immigrant experience, a Ukrainian transplant to the United States grapples with the convoluted legacy of her home country.

Once head bookkeeper at an important gas pipe factory in east Ukraine, Nadia Andreevna now nannies for a family in Brooklyn, navigating an unfamiliar land of artisanal mayonnaise and American parenting. Nadia had fled the politically destabilized country in 2008, aiming to send for her daughter, Larissa—detained due to a bureaucratic loophole—immediately. But six years have passed, and she spends her days writing pleading letters to senators and obsessively tracking news reports that document mounting violence in her home region. As Nadia resorts to increasingly extreme measures to reunite with her daughter—including scouting American suitors for Larissa at nightclubs—the narrative periodically flips back to Nadia’s raw, affecting life as a single mother in Ukraine, fighting to carve out an existence for herself and her daughter amid a rapidly changing country. When Larissa’s immigration suddenly looms closer, Nadia must reckon with how her memories of Larissa—whom she has not seen for seven years—abut against reality, and learn to forge her way in a culture that poses frequent affronts to her identity. In beautiful and emotionally perceptive prose, Reyn (*The Imperial Wife*) probes the intimate ways cultures clash within individuals, forcing them to knit together disparate truths to make sense of the world, and provides a tender depiction of how mother-daughter bonds morph over time and space.”

Birthday by **César Aira**



Here’s what *Publishers Weekly* [had to say](#) about *Birthday*: “In this profound memoir, Aira (*The Linden Tree*) turns 50 and sees this benchmark as an opportunity to make changes in his life. A casual conversation with his wife leads him to a darker contemplation of youth wasted, a diminishment of artistic authority in his work, and his potentially

and to his struggles with life outside writing. In his early 40s, he began a grand project, a conscious departure from his 'little novels,' which he sees as marginal. He calls it the Encyclopedia, envisioning it as a comprehensive book of knowledge. But at 50, all he has is a collection of sketches and plans, with not a single page of manuscript, and it's unlikely that this ambitious project will be finished. There are thoughtful anecdotes about **Ludwig Wittgenstein**, a waitress (and budding writer) whom he meets in a café, and **Evariste Galois**, a brilliant young mathematician killed in a duel in 1832. The reader gradually realizes Aira's seemingly feigned self-deprecation is actually clear-eyed honesty, and the ostensible simplicity of the volume carries powerful and incisive ideas about life and aging."

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THOMAS BECKWITH *is a staff writer for The Millions and an MFA candidate at Johns Hopkins. Prior to coming to Baltimore, he studied literature and worked in IT while living in Dublin, Ireland. You can find him on Twitter at [@tdbeckwith](#).*

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