fashion


Brock (A Fine Imitation) portrays the 1953 upper-crust New York social scene through the eyes of 25-year-old Kitty Tessler. She is beautiful, smart, and rich, but as the granddaughter of Russian immigrants and the daughter of a self-made hotel magnate, Kitty finds her ambitions to reach the top are thwarted by old money. While she is plotting her social ascent by dating the right men, her father wants her to settle down by pursuing his hotel manager, Andre. To avoid her father’s ambitions while furthering her own schemes, Kitty agrees to a trip to a Miami hotel run by Andre. Kitty is shallow and mercenary, in contrast to her long-suffering friend Hen, especially as she plots to steal Hen’s fiancé. But as the novel moves toward the satisfying and heartwarming conclusion, Kitty changes. She falls for a penniless musician, becomes aware of the poverty and injustice outside her small, privileged circle in both Miami and Havana, and learns self-reliance. VERDICT A solid choice for his- torical fiction fans interested in the 1950s as well as readers who enjoy tales of women becoming empowered, taking control of their lives, and learning true friendship.—Jan Marry, Lanexa, VA


Lucy Sparks has it all—a great career, handsome husband. So she believes, until the day she wakes up in a hospital and discovers the life she’s been living for the past four years is a fabrication. The road to recovery is a difficult one, with potholes of perceived truth and the random earth-shattering drop of finding out that the incident in question is a false memory her injured brain created out of whole cloth. Brown (The Choices We Make), well known for her heartfelt and layered portraits of regular people, weaves threads of an emotional journey in which Lucy’s first-person point of view is occasionally peppered with a third-person chapter, signifying memories that may or may not be real. Secondary characters, including boyfriend Matt, her parents, and beloved husband Daniel, are realistic and three-dimensional, but it’s Lucy herself who is the center of this story, a flawed, relatable character facing an incredible situation. Her emotions swing frequently on her way to discovering that her life is only what she makes it. VERDICT Lucy’s path to becoming a whole person will resonate with readers who appreciate emotional explorations with realistic characters and difficult choices. [See Prepub Alert, 12/11/17.—Charli Osborne, Oak Park P. L., MI]


Since her father’s death, Oriana has become a devout believer in fairy tales, and when she meets Harry, she’s convinced that he’s the one who must complete her story. After he finds a treehouse, fights a wolf, and discovers a very unusual book, Harry begins to believe that Oriana just might be right. VERDICT Part fairy tale and, at the same time, heartbreakingly realistic, Cohen’s third novel (after The Man in the Window) will entrance readers from page one, and by the end, even skeptics will agree that magic can still be found in the most unlikely places and in the most surprising people if only we’re willing to look.—Elisabeth Clark, West Florida P.L., Pensacola


The Man Booker short-listed Crace (Har- vest), gifted at creating one-of-a-kind worlds, here immerses us in the beautifully limned if somewhat claustrophobic life of Alfred Busi, famed for his music in his unnamed town but now past his prime and mostly sitting alone in his villa, mourning his recently deceased wife. The night before he is to receive the town’s Worthiness Award, he is attacked in his courtyard. His officious sister-in-law suspects a cat, but Alfred feels certain it was a child. After he accepts the award with his face bandaged, a news story by underhanded reporter Sour- briquet fuels rumors of an ancient, Nean- derthal-like people in the nearby woods even as fears of the homeless burst into flame. Meanwhile, Alfred’s opportunistic nephew Joseph, a businessman aspiring to be mayor, plans to sell the villa out from under his uncle and build swanky apartments. Even Joseph’s mother is appalled. The not entirely surprising discovery of the attacker’s identity, plus Alfred’s new friendship with a neighbor also threatened by Joseph’s scheme, create a gentle denouement. VERDICT Slim yet at times overex- tended, this wistful story of memory, family conflict, and human small-mindedness will satisfy literary readers in an autumnal mood. [See Prepub Alert, 12/11/17.—Barbara Hoffert, Library Journal]


Become entranced by a realistic fairy tale, family and deep questions, the Real Lolita
relationship—between a blustery, old-school family patriarch who is manufacturing shoes in China and his much quieter, idealistic son, Alex, who is inheriting the Cohen family business—is handled with great warmth and humor. Father and son clash over working conditions at the factory, and Wise handles the many complexities at play in this conflict with nuance and subtlety. Alex falls in love with a young Chinese woman named Ivy who is a political activist trying to improve conditions in factories, and their skillfully drawn relationship drives much of the action in the novel. Wise explores the situation’s political, economic, and moral complexities with considerable skill, alert to the many ways that entrenched power and wealth perpetuate inequality and oppression. The only weak element is the unlikely happy ending of a political situation that is deeply cynical, corrupt, and fearless in using violence to oppress workers. VERDICT An impressive debut; recommended for readers interested in globalization, diversity, and social justice.—Patrick Sullivan, Manchester Community Coll., CT


Alan Querry has never been to America to visit daughter Vanessa, who’s teaching philosophy at Skidmore. When he learns from her new boyfriend Josh that she’s severely depressed, he hurriedly leaves England, teaming up with Vanessa’s hard-driving music executive sister Helen, who needs to be in New York. Somewhat withdrawn and fragile since her mother’s desertion of the family, Vanessa seems stymied in her career but crazy about carefree, devilishly handsome Josh. Will he really commit? Was his call for help as much for him as for Vanessa? Questions multiply as Alan wrestles with business reversals, Helen asks for help with the start-up she envisions after quitting Sony, and they both debate what’s best for Vanessa, even as the sisters continue their lifelong squabbling and Alan adopts the plangent role of aging but caring parent. Can we be responsible for others’ happiness? How do we manage life’s “unfinished and perhaps unfinishable complexities?” What’s really a life well lived? New Yorker book critic Wood (The Book Against God) contemplates deep questions while painting an indelible portrait of a family coming to grips, clarifying complex, recognizable problems as he moves his characters forward in ways that seem real and satisfying. VERDICT Pitch perfect and highly recommended. [See Prepub Alert, 12/11/17.]—Barbara Hoffert, Library Journal