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Rome: a history in seven sackings, Matthew Kneale (book review)

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In 1937, Chennault went to China under a three-year contract with the Chinese government, working closely with leader Chiang Kai-shek and wife Madame Chiang to survey and modernize the Chinese air force. Chennault's persistent lobbying of Franklin Roosevelt and his aides led the unit to receive their signature Curtiss P-40 Warhawk, painted with a shark face to strike fear to enemies. **VERDICT** Kleiner illuminates the battles, personalities, and personal lives of the Flying Tigers, a band of rag-tag pilots sure to enthrall general readers and military history buffs.—Harry Willems, Great Bend, KS

Kneale, Matthew. *Rome: A History in Seven Sackings*. S. & S. May 2018. 432p. illus. notes. bibliog. index. ISBN 9781501191091. \$30; ebk. ISBN 9781501191107. HIST

How do you tell the story of the Eternal City in a single book? Novelist and historian Kneale (*English Passengers; When We Were Romans*) attempts an episodic approach, centered on seven major instances of Rome's invasion by outside forces. Each sacking is given a single chapter, beginning with the Gallic invasions of the 380s BCE and ending with the Nazi occupation and Allied liberation of the city during World War II. Chapters open with the circumstances of the invasion, detours for an overview of Rome's condition and social character at that particular time, and conclude by relating the details of the plundering and its aftermath. The move from chapter to chapter usually necessitates a chronological leap of several hundred years, but in spite of the gaps, Kneale's choice of focal points provides a stirring view of the general history of Rome and its endurance and adaptability. **VERDICT** A solid history of Rome that isn't the typical straightforward narrative. Readers will find much to appreciate in Kneale's love for the city's past.—Kathleen McCallister, Tulane Univ., New Orleans

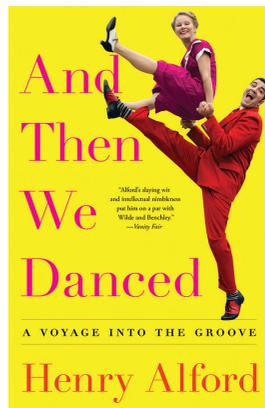
Mahjoub, Jamal. *A Line in the River: Khartoum, City of Memory*. Bloomsbury Pr. May 2018. 416p. notes. index. ISBN 9781408885468. \$30. MEMOIR/HIST

In this intensely personal account, Mahjoub blends memoir with historical narrative to capture the complexities and nuances of his homeland, specifically the Sudanese city of Khartoum. Primarily a novelist by trade, Mahjoub is comfortable weaving the intricate layers of history, politics, religion, and culture into a single lyrical tale. The style of this book, which bounces back and forth among historical memory, political intrigue, and personal reflection, is at first confusing but quickly becomes more intimate. This intimacy is a theme that runs throughout the narrative lines. Mahjoub doesn't just

Dancing Through Life

Alford, Henry. *And Then We Danced: A Voyage into the Groove*. S. & S. Jun. 2018. 256p. ISBN 9781501122255. \$26; ebk. ISBN 9781501122279. MEMOIR

Humor writer (New Yorker, *Vanity Fair*) Alford takes readers on an entertaining romp through his various dance experiences, reflecting on dance themes and relating them with amusing anecdotes. Dance giants (Martha Graham, Twyla Tharp, Bob Fosse, Savion Glover) are discussed, as Alford relates an encounter with Tharp at a performance of *The One Hundreds* by the public (himself included). He includes quips, such as "I was the dancer equivalent of typos" along the way, and views dance through the themes of social entree, politics/rebellion, and emotion/release/physicality. Also considered are religion/spirituality, nostalgia, intimacy, and healing. Alford takes tap class, learns to partner in ballet, and performs contact improv. He mixes in history, giving context to dance styles. And because dance can sometimes be



intimidating, Alford delves into challenging situations and shares his ups and downs with readers. He also visits Alzheimer's patients and dances with the group. Other topics covered include the 5Rhythms movement meditation practice, being a "living room dancer," and even deodorant. **VERDICT** Lots of fun here for the dancer in all of us.—Barbara Kundanis, Longmont P.L., CO

Flaherty, Meghan. *Tango Lessons*. Houghton Harcourt. Jun. 2018. 320p. ISBN 9780544980709. \$26; ebk. ISBN 9780544986633. MEMOIR

In her debut memoir,

Flaherty takes us on her journey down the rabbit hole into the world of tango. What starts with taking a single dance class becomes an obsession, with the author eventually describing herself as "a four-door Volvo among Ferrari coupes" in regard to the skill level she achieves. Surviving abuse early in her life, Flaherty struggles with intimacy in her 20s, and Tango enables her to touch others, in a formal sense. Working tedious jobs and in an unfulfilling relationship, she becomes immersed in a culture of classes and clubs. Since this takes place in New York, the atmosphere of the city makes the scene all the more romantic. As Flaherty gets better at the dance, her self-confidence and independence grow. Despite the book's dark themes (even with a lighthearted cover), Flaherty establishes an intimacy with readers that will make them hope she finds happiness. **VERDICT** An engaging memoir that will have readers looking for the closest tango studio.—Barbara Kundanis, Longmont P.L., CO

explore or critique his homeland; he strips Sudan bare and considers the impact that the story of Khartoum and Sudan has had on its culture, people, and himself. He also isn't afraid to showcase the failures and foibles of the country's history against the beauty and successes, which makes for a very enlightening text. **VERDICT** Anyone interested in exploring the impact that time, place, and history can have on a culture or individual will find Mahjoub's narrative gripping, while those curious about the complexity of Sudan will find it revealing.—Elizabeth Zeitz, Otterbein Univ. Lib., Westerville, OH

Mead, Corey. *The Lost Pilots: The Spectacular Rise and Scandalous Fall of Aviation's Golden Couple*. Flatiron:

Macmillan. May 2018. 288p. maps. notes. index. ISBN 9781250109248. \$27.99; ebk. ISBN 9781250109255. HIST

Mead (English, Baruch Coll.; *Angelic Music*) chronicles the intertwining lives of two pilots from the golden age of aviation: Bill Lancaster and Jesse Keith-Miller. In October 1927, they flew from England to Australia in a light plane, losing out by days from being "first," though Keith-Miller was the first female pilot to make the trip. Married to other people but wildly in love, the pair sought out new flying adventures in America. Following the Great Depression, flying work was spotty, and tensions within their relationship mounted. In 1932, Lancaster was arrested for murdering Hayden Clark, Keith-Miller's new lover

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