

Got a Feeling '21 Is Gonna Be a Good Year



Especially if you and me and these birds see it in together.

Your Narrator has been largely AWOL the past year. Mea maxima. The First Plague Year took its toll on ambition and productivity. 2021 is gonna be different.

I'm setting a few semi-ambitious goals for the year. Something doable, but challenging at the same time. And that means big ripples to this here little blog and the handful of you who still bother to read when I post. (My fault entirely. In June, my post about Anderson Cooper and Cornel West garnered around 1500 hits. By the time I got around to posting again a few months later, interest had waned and I did not even hit 100 on either post. Discouraging? Yeah, a bit, but nobody to blame but myself. KFG, yo.) Maybe I can reward you stalwart pals and draw some of my less devoted crowd back again.

So what am I up to? Here's the plan:

- Morning Writing; Mon to Sat, first act of the day. Once the dogs are fed and coffee brewed, I will sit down and write three to four pages of long-hand in a spiral notebook. I've been doing this since September, and it has helped get the juice flowing again. (Sunday morning is for the NYT crossword.)
- Billy Bard Intensive; M-W-F. Beginning w Sonnet #1, read and listen along with Sir Patrick, one sonnet per session. I should complete the series of 154 sonnets by

New Years Eve.

Dig the Gillian Welch t-shirt!

- Fiction Writing: This is the bigly ambitious piece. I will deliver (to myself) one short story draft every other Friday beginning January 15. That comes to 26 short stories in some semblance of wholeness for 2021. Perhaps this will add up to something.
- The i2b Blog: I promise, my pretties, that I will submit a substantial post every other Friday beginning this week, January 8. This is the bare minimum for i2b in 2021. There will most likely be additional posts along the way – musings about books, music, film/tv, politics, &c. – but the big work will be the alternating Fridays. I have a few larger thematic pieces I’ve been mulling for a while that have felt too daunting to undertake in Our Year of COVID. Time to quit fucking around, as Aristotle used to say; that was his twist on Plato’s “keep fucking going”. (You can look it up.)

It’s not that 2020 was a complete loss, though much went missing. Look, we dumped the Trump Chump. We flipped the Senate (crowing a bit ahead of the final call on Ossoff, I know, but I am uncharacteristically optimistic this morning).

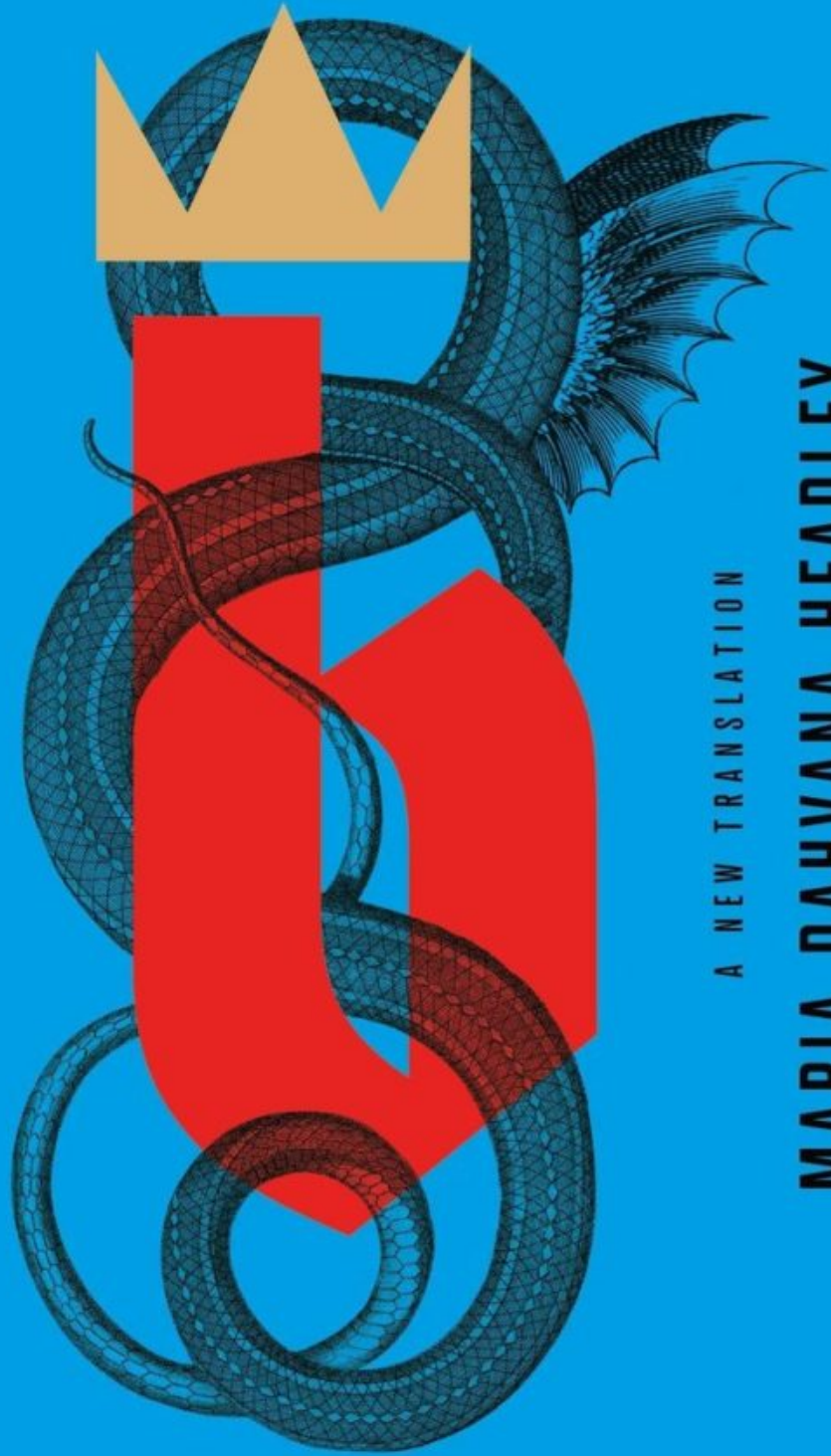


2020 was not really a year to engender optimism, but somehow, here we are. I made the best of it. Life in the bubble with Stanwyck and the dogs is damn near close to paradisiacal. We are all healthy. We have been burning fires on the patio and sitting at a distance with a few select visitors now and again. We had the kids home for Christmas for an extended stretch, all of us isolated and tested ahead of time so we could behave more or less normally.

As near as I can calculate, I read* at least 58 books last year (*five or six of these as audio books; does that count as reading?), several more than once. I went deep down the Faulkner hole. Tons of Civil War/Reconstruction history. I

listened to Alan Moore's *Jerusalem* start to end, which marks my third journey through that epic. It took several months of dog walking to make that trip, but Simon Vance's narration made it more than worth it. More on this later.

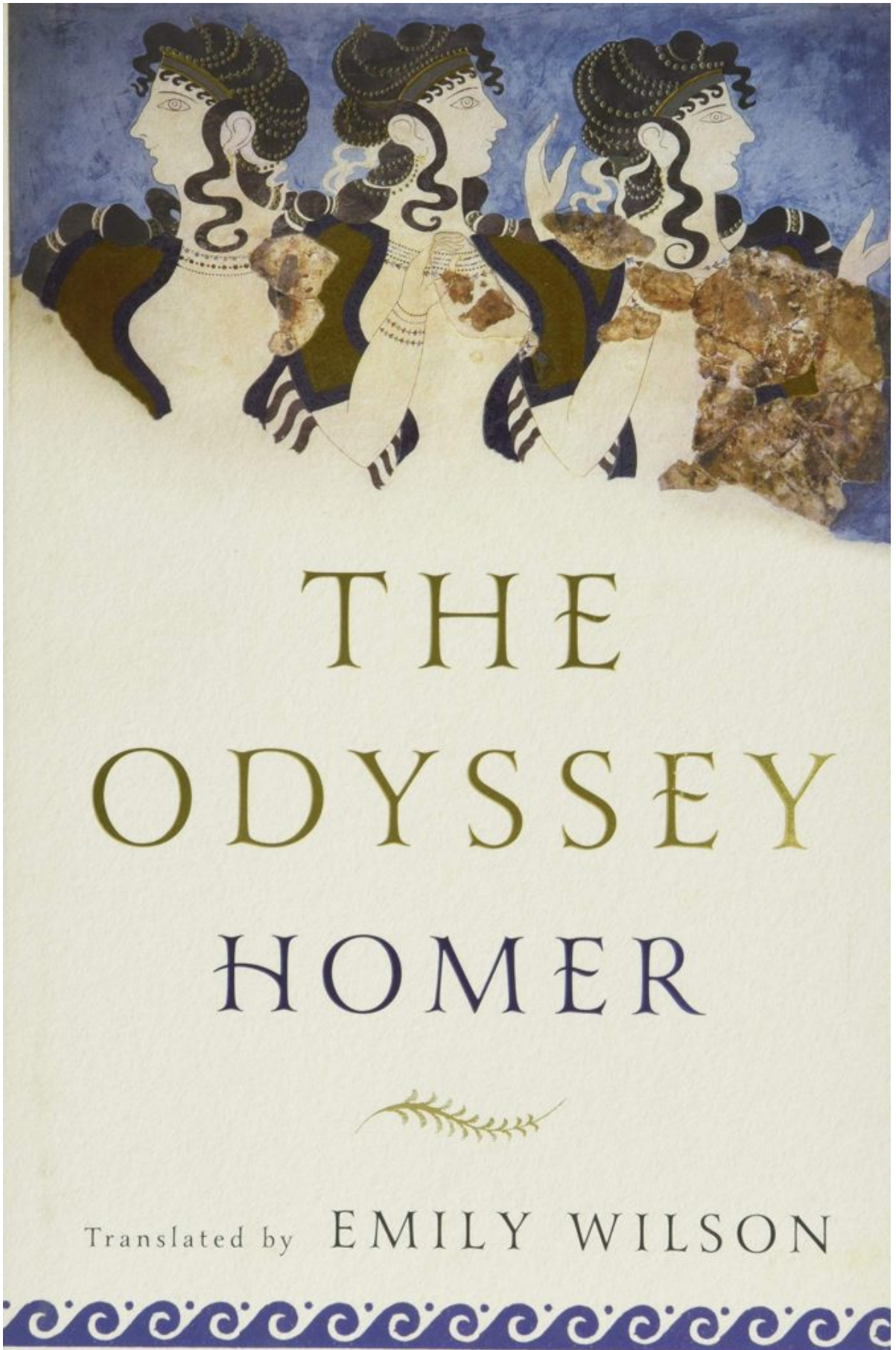
BEOWULF



A NEW TRANSLATION

MARIA DAHVANA HEADLEY

Old Stories...



New Voices

Some fab-o time spent in the company of Beowulf and Odysseus

via new translations, both re-imagining a less male-centric attitude to the tales. And JD Jackson's narration of *Beowulf* is killer. (Not quite as taken by Clare Dane's recitation of Homer. Whaddyagonnado?)

Shortlisted
The
Booker
Prize
2019

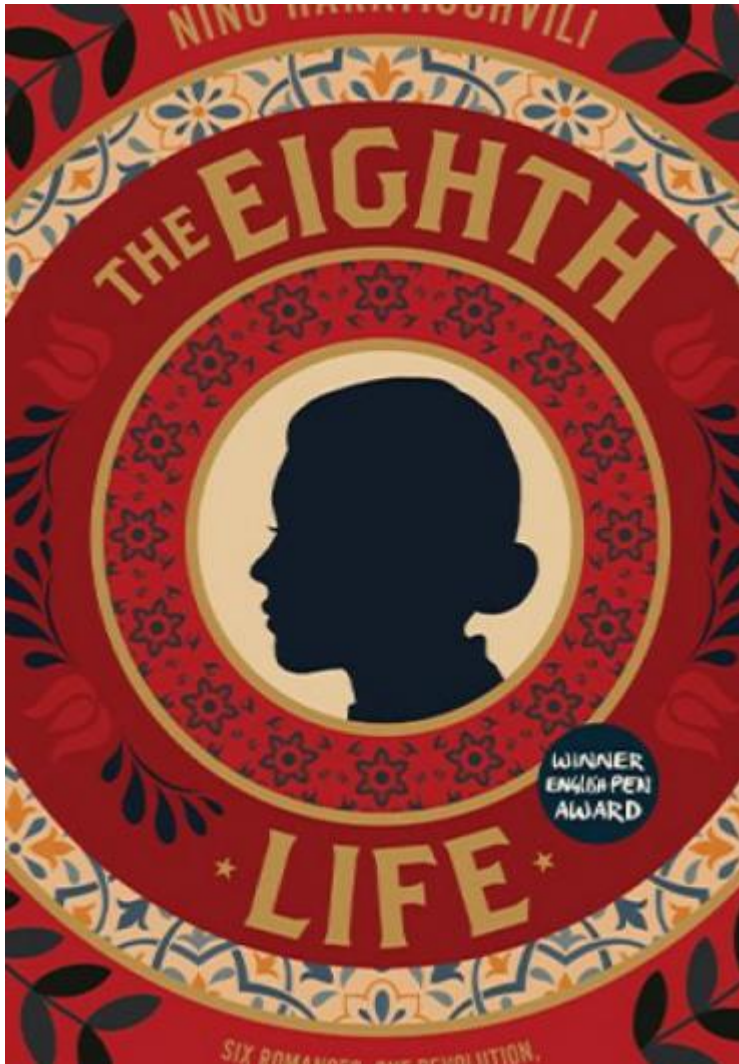
Ducks, Newburyport

Lucy Ellmann



“Unstoppable ... like nothing you’ve ever read before.”

—Booker Prize Jury citation



A couple of other gargantuan epics. (I like big books and I cannot lie.) These were both fantastic in their way. *Ducks* is a tough sled, a little north of 1000 pages and largely a single sentence. Brilliant, Joycean wordplay and narratively as daring as anything I've ever read. Once I caught the rhythm, it was un-put-down-able. But I refuse to recommend this book to anyone. It is nothing like an easy read, and I've endured enough resentment for my advocacy of *Infinite Jest*.

The Eighth Life, otoh, is a must for anyone who loves the epic Russian narratives of Tolstoy/Dostoyevsky &c. Sprawling across a century and 950 pages, this is a tale of the Bolshevik Revolution, Stalinism, and beyond, centered in Georgia. Both *Ducks* and *Eighth Life* made the Booker Prize list.

Toss in a hefty bundle of sci-fi and apocalit, and the

occasional trifling indulgence pulper redolent with corpses and impressive gams, and I had a big year in the pages. Very little rhyme or reason to it all, just following my instincts and engaging in the occasional spasm of book review-induced buying sprees. Two books down so far in 2021 with a couple of doorstoppers (*Warmth of Other Suns* and Obama's latest) underway.

Which brings us out of the pages and into the material world.





At Stanwyck's instigation/inspiration (pushed along by some recently discovered wood rot across/through/under the living room floor), we have tackled some household projects, and the place has never felt better, inside and out. It was a rough two months being displaced from the primary living area (damage was way extensive), but we survived and had the place back in shape for the holidays and cold weather. At least we could live in the house, unlike the shit show of last Fall.

The neighborhood remains a tree-canopied haven for bird life – like those wood storks up top of this post. Long walks with the dogs are easy enough to manage without bumping into other people. Distancing comes pretty easy for us. We got really good at it during the cancer episode; I was due for “normal” social interaction about the time the COVID took over the world in March. We just kept on keeping on the way we'd already done since the previous March. Really hoping we wrap this up well before we hit the three-year mark, but the vax progress so far is not very impressive. I expect the critical

mass necessary for free-movement in the U.S. is at least 6 months away, and probably much longer for much of the world. Hope I'm wrong.

Hermit life suits us, it appears, though we cannot last forever this way. We miss people. I miss sitting in a pub or café and pretending to write. I miss live music. We really miss pointing the car down the road and following it wherever. We have not missed eating out that much, finding that the food we make is generally better and cheaper than the fare on offer at most eateries, but we do miss having dinner out (or in) with friends.

So here's to being able to get together soon. In the meantime, please stay tuned to i2b and share whenever you think it is worth the distribution. I'll be working on a new subscription/alert function and for some way of letting comments back in without being flooded by bots. Some re-design is also long overdue. The kids in the banner photos are darn near unrecognizable.

Someday baby, who knows what the wind blows. At least I got a new Blog Motto and home page banner photo up there. Suitable for framing in 2021.