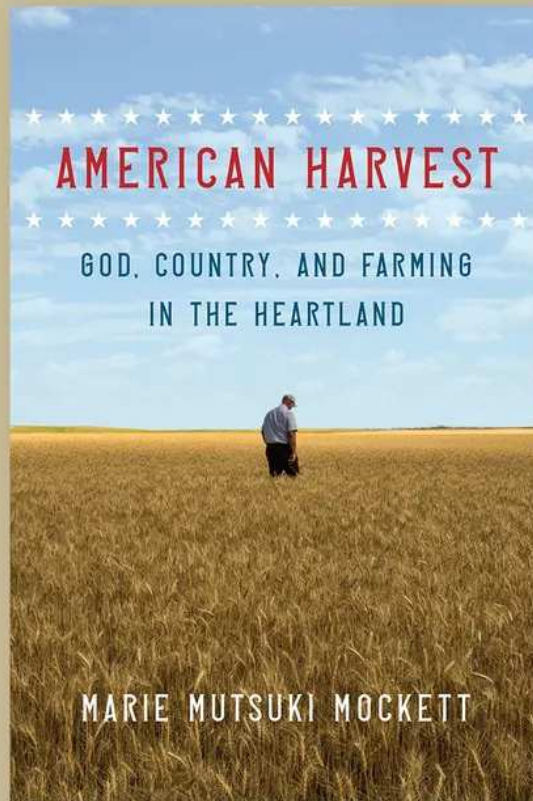


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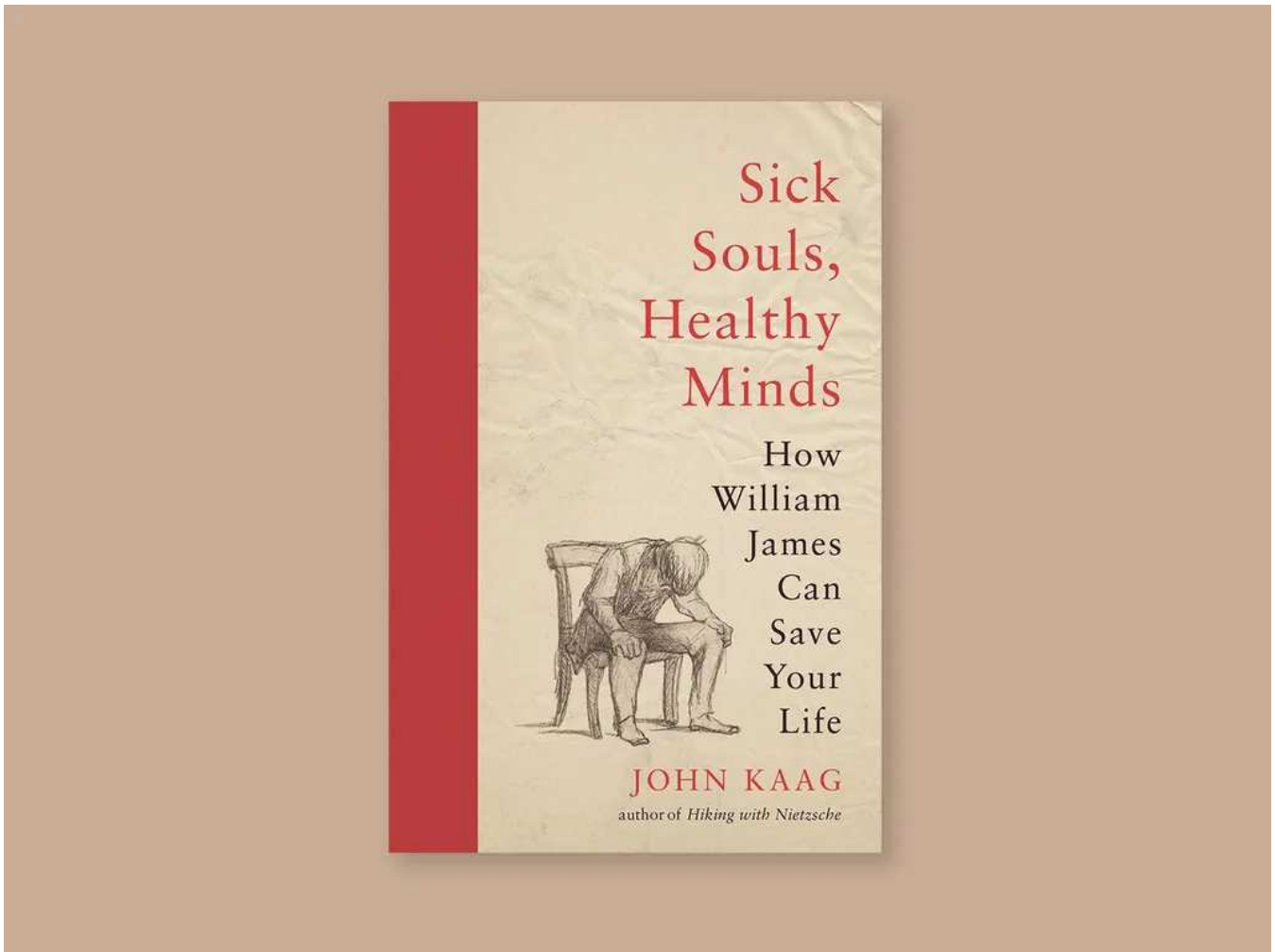
“American Harvest,” “Sick Souls, Healthy Minds,” “Afterlife,” and “Our Riches.”

May 4, 2020



American Harvest, by Marie Mutsuki Mockett (*Graywolf*). Harvest season in the American wheat belt begins in Texas, in the late spring, when hundreds of seasonal workers are hired into crews and begin moving from farm to farm, to cut the year's grain. In this reflective travelogue, Mockett, who grew up in California, inherits a stake in her family's farm, in Nebraska, and sets out to understand the ways of the heartland by accompanying one of these harvesting teams on its months-long trek

north. Mockett, writing with a gentle self-consciousness, offers a compassionate portrait of conservative evangelicals, along with lucid musings on agricultural science, Native American history, and the quiet majesty of the Great Plains.



Sick Souls, Healthy Minds, by *John Kaag* (Princeton). This earnest, accessible treatment of William James’s thought is propelled by personal crises: the author, a professor of philosophy, leans on James’s writing through the upheaval of his second divorce, his first forays into co-parenting, and his experiences teaching in the modern university system. Along the way, he delves into pragmatism, a philosophical tradition that James (the eldest brother of Henry, the novelist) pioneered, which holds that truths should be judged by their practical consequences. As Kaag traces James’s intellectual path away from determinism and depression, he both clarifies thorny academic questions and offers dashes of self-help, showing how today’s anxious souls might apply James’s principles and learn how to “be not afraid of life.”

Afterlife, by *Julia Alvarez (Algonquin)*. The protagonist of this resonant novel, Antonia Vega, is an English professor who finds the comforts of language diminished after the sudden death of her husband. The needs of others soon bleed into her grief: an undocumented worker from a nearby farm asks Antonia, who is originally from the Dominican Republic, to help reunite him with the lover he left behind in Mexico, and the disappearance of one of Antonia's sisters further spurs her to muster her husband's generous spirit. The novel, set in 2019, poses questions about American immigration and mental-health policies, and it is a moving exploration of the ways we inadvertently fail the people we love. As Antonia observes, "It's a great effrontery to discover other people aren't you."

Our Riches, by *Kaouther Adimi*, translated from the French by *Chris Andrews* (*New Directions*). This stirring novel, which was shortlisted for the Prix Goncourt, is based on the life of Edmond Charlot, the publisher best known for discovering Albert Camus and for opening the famed bookstore Les Vraies Richesses in Algiers, in 1936. In his mission to distribute great literature, Charlot confronted overwhelming odds—he ran out of paper during the Second World War, and French colonial forces destroyed another of his stores during the Algerian war. His story is interspersed with that of a young man, sent to gut the storefront of Les Vraies Richesses eighty years later, who discovers the spirit of Charlot—and that of his bibliophilia—alive in the community.

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