

# Memphis

THE CITY MAGAZINE

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## What We Are Reading: Five Staff Picks

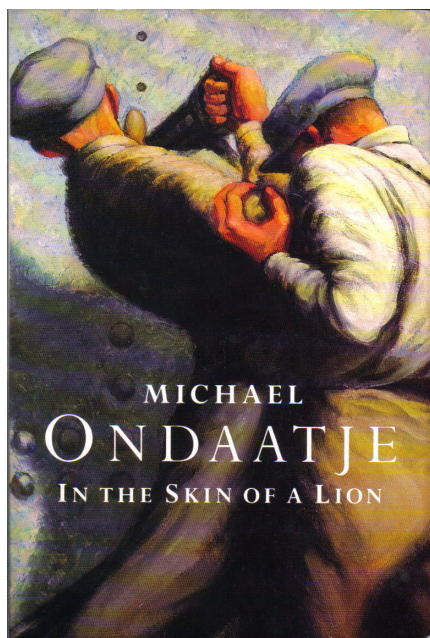
A peek at our bookshelves.

BY EILEEN TOWNSEND

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1. *Inside Memphis Business* editor Richard Alley is re-reading *In the Skin of a Lion* by Michael Ondaatje. Ondaatje has written a lot of good books, including *The English Patient*, but *In the Skin of a Lion* might be his best. The postmodern novel is set in Toronto in the 1930s. Its characters' stories collectively trace the industrialization of the city. If that sounds dry, it's not. Ondaatje is a beautiful stylist in addition to being a great storyteller.



2. *The Flyer's* Susan Ellis just started reading *The Magpies* by Mark Edwards, a psychological thriller about a young couple who move into a new home only to find out that the neighborhood is not as friendly as it seems. Edwards is a British novelist whose other titles include *What You Wish For* and *Follow You Home*. He says he is interested in stories where bad things happen to ordinary people.

3. *Memphis* magazine editor Kenneth Neill is reading *Jacksonland* by Steve Inskeep (of NPR's *Morning Edition*) which is "about Andy's dealings with John Ross, chief of the Cherokees, and how Jackson and his cohorts stole millions of acres from the Five Civilized Tribes (1815-1825) and then sent them packing to Oklahoma." Inskeep has received a lot of praise for his tight historical reporting. This book sheds light on why many people think Andrew Jackson should be removed from the \$20 bill.

4. *901* blog editor and *Memphis* associate editor Shara Clark is reading *Of A Seedless Generation*, a novel by Memphian Dalton C. Brink. The book presents a fictionalized account of Brink's time in the Navy studying and running nuclear reactors, moving to Montana to work at an exclusive ski/golf resort, and working the marijuana fields in Northern California. You can read the first few chapters [online here](#).



5. I'm reading art critic Ben Davis' *9.5 Theses on Art and Class*, a series of essays about how class dynamics form the art world. Davis works from a Marxist framework, but the book is notably not mired in theory. Davis' writing does a lot to break down the weird economics of art (by which art is simultaneously "a symbolic escape valve for radical impulses," "a luxury good," a token of "ruling class ideology," and a universal site of creative expression), meanwhile keeping in sight the great hope of what art can do for a society. So far my favorite essay from the book is "The Agony of the Interloper" about how fine art's supposedly open parameters ("anything can be art!") is actually a complex code that bars admission for people outside the know.

## Most Popular



### Five Things To Do This Weekend in Memphis October 23rd-25th

Memphis frights, feasts, and festivities will have



### Johnny Cash in Cooper-Young

Local organizations have started a fundraising effort to put a statue of



### Midtown Party Bike Adds Downtown Route, Grizz Tours

Sprock 'n' Roll — a "party bike" that offers tours of