

FICTION

New York Times
best sellers

■ Fiction

- 1. The Da Vinci Code** — Dan Brown. Doubleday, \$24.95
- 2. Glorious Appearing** — Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins. Tyndale, \$24.99
- 3. Nighttime Is My Time** — Mary Higgins Clark. Simon & Schuster, \$25.95
- 4. The Five People You Meet in Heaven** — Mitch Albom. Hyperion, \$19.95
- 5. Therapy** — Jonathan Kellerman. Ballantine, \$26.95
- 6. Angels & Demons** — Dan Brown. Atria, \$19.95
- 7. The Full Cupboard of Life** — Alexander McCall Smith. Pantheon, \$19.95
- 8. Reckless Abandon** — Stuart Woods. Putnam, \$25.95
- 9. Can You Keep A Secret?** — Sophie Kinsella. Dial, \$21.95
- 10. The Last Juror** — John Grisham. Doubleday, \$27.95

■ Nonfiction

- 1. Plan of Attack** — Bob Woodward. Simon & Schuster, \$28
- 2. Eats, Shoots and Leaves** — Lynne Truss. Gotham, \$17.50
- 3. Against All Enemies** — Richard A. Clarke. Free Press, \$27
- 4. Three Weeks With My Brother** — Nicholas Sparks and Micah Sparks. Warner, \$22
- 5. Worse Than Watergate** — John W. Dean. Little, Brown, \$22.95
- 6. Founding Mothers** — Cokie Roberts. Morrow, \$24.95
- 7. Deliver Us From Evil** — Sean Hannity. ReganBooks and HarperCollins, \$26.95
- 8. Ten Minutes From Normal** — Karen Hughes. Viking, \$25.95
- 9. Blue Blood** — Edward Conlon. Riverhead, \$26.95
- 10. House of Bush, House of Saud** — Craig Unger. Scribner, \$26

Local best sellers

■ Fiction

- 1. The Da Vinci Code** — Dan Brown
- 2. The Five People You Meet in Heaven** — Mitch Albom
- 3. The Full Cupboard of Life** — Alexander McCall Smith
- 4. The Shadow of the Wind** — Carlos Ruiz Zafon
- 5. Dancing With Einstein** — Kate Wenner
- 6. The Jane Austen Book Club** — Karen Joy Fowler
- 7. The Narrows** — Michael Connelly
- 8. The Birth of Venus** — Sarah Dunant
- 9. The Bookman's Promise** — John Dunning
- 10. Eventide** — Kent Haruf

■ Nonfiction

- 1. Plan of Attack** — Bob Woodward
- 2. Eats, Shoots & Leaves** — Lynne Truss
- 3. A Woman With a Minute** — Barbara Stoker
- 4. Bush Country** — John Podhoretz
- 5. South Beach Diet** — Arthur Agatston
- 6. Alexander Hamilton** — Ron Chernow
- 7. Against All Enemies** — Richard A. Clarke
- 8. The Exception to the Rulers** — Amy Goodman and David Goodman
- 9. The Proper Care and Feeding of Husbands** — Laura Schlessinger
- 10. Dark Nights of the Soul** — Thomas Moore

Information for the local best-sellers comes from *The Tattered Cover Book Store*, *Borders Books in Englewood* and *the Boulder Book Store*.

'Land' fertile
for DoctorowCharacters bloom
with master's touch
in five short stories

By Mary Elkins

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

A teen-age boy is a junior partner in his mother's crafty conning of a single, moneyed, Midwestern man.

An unbalanced young woman steals a newborn baby to keep as her own.

A girl with no past and no future drifts from one bad husband to another.

A cult leader swindles the community and leaves town with one member's wife.

An FBI agent, investigating a dead body in the White House Rose Garden, runs into a coverup from the top down.

In one sense, these five sentences summarize the stories in this new collection from a major American

writer, E.L. Doctorow. But in another sense, the descriptions are misleading.

These scenarios are familiar, almost to the point of cliché; we read stories like this in the newspaper every day and watch fictionalized versions on television at night.

But Doctorow, the author of *Ragtime*, *Billy Bathgate*, *The Book of Daniel* and seven other best-selling novels, is a writer of remarkable gifts. He moves his pen across these age-old stories with a master's

touch, and they become both original and deeply affecting. In each case, they surprise with unexpected turns, and these turns bring us back to a familiar place viewed from a different angle.

One of Doctorow's gifts on display here is characterization. These are short stories, not novels, and so the writer

doesn't have the leisure of hundreds of pages in which to bring a character to life. Doctorow treats even the most unlikely losers with

Sweet Land
Stories■ By E.L.
Doctorow.Random House,
139 pages, \$22.95.
\$25.

■ Grade: A

Flip to SWEETLAND on 36D

E.L. Doctorow shows off his gift of irony in *Sweet Land Stories*.

Finding beauty amid the wounds of war

By Jessica Slater

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

"How did I become this sort of man?" asks the central character of *The Daydreaming Boy*.

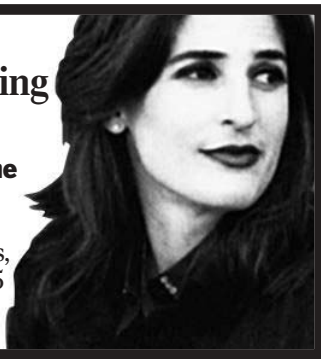
Born in Armenia two years after the Ottoman Turks inflicted genocide on his people in 1915, Vahé Tcheubjian was sold to the Turks and then left at an orphanage in Lebanon. As an adult living in Beirut in the 1960s with his wife, Juliana, he tries to put the past behind him.

The novel traces his unraveling consciousness as the ghosts of his childhood come back to haunt him with increasing intensity. It's a stunning portrait of war's bleak inheritance. Despite the grueling subject matter, Micheline Aharonian Marcom's prose spans the full range of human emotion with spellbinding and luminous beauty.

The novel is broken into short chapters that skip back and forth in time from Vahé's married life in Beirut in the '60s to his childhood years in the early 1920s at the Bird's Nest orphanage and briefly forward to Beirut in 1986, after 11 summers of civil war.

Marcom doesn't provide page upon page of historical detail about the Armenian genocide. Rather, she draws us into the mind of a refugee, where memory, history, lies and imagination chase one another's tails for so long that they become inseparable.

The disjointed transitions can be confusing, but once you enter the

The
Daydreaming
Boy■ By Micheline
Aharonian
Marcom, right.
Riverhead Books,
212 pages, \$23.95
■ Grade: A

rhythm of the writing, the juxtapositions become as telling as the events and recollections themselves. Through the fractured lens of his consciousness, the answer to Vahé's question emerges:

"The nows become jumbled, riff, they flow together as the tributaries will flow into the sea and become one strain of water indistinguishable from the other waters — because: all of it is me."

Vahé's relationships betray the extent of damage inflicted on him by his experiences.

Several characters figure prominently in his thoughts: the specter of Vosto, a boy from the orphanage whose arrival provides fresh prey for the boys who had been tormenting Vahé, thus relieving his suffering but also compounding his guilt; Vahé's absent mother and his wife; Beatrice, a young Palestinian girl who works as a domestic for Vahé's neighbor in Beirut and for whom Vahé develops an obsessive longing;

and Jumba, a chimpanzee at the local zoo, where he often walks, and who becomes a measuring stick against which Vahé tries to fathom his own humanity.

Vahé's marriage to Juliana is described as the result of "desperate convenience, a coincidence of time and place and sentiment." As the intensity of his obsession with Beatrice increases, so does the loneliness within his marriage: "Our marriage became a container that held the lonely like a boy holds an empty soup cup and wants just a small amount, just the littlest bit more of some fatty soup."

His relationships sink further and further into the realm of fantasy, and the fantasies are often disturbingly violent. He perceives himself as a beast, partly because of his brutal desires but more deeply because of the inhumane treatment he and his people have endured:

"What distinguishes us from the dark best?" he asks, drawing parallels between the bars of Jumba's cage and the balcony railings that divide his own sight.

This obsession with violence and dehumanization makes hideous sense in the context of genocide:

The Armenian language, writes Marcom, "was murdered in the summer 1915 when no word or sentence or lyric or ode to man's dignity or proclamation or newspaper article

or pleading by the Patriarch or pleading by the girl before the soldier violated or letter or bill or identity card could say, say it so that it would be heard, . . . their tongue could not alter the smallest breeze. . . . It could not say (for pity's sake, honor's sake) to the Turkish soldier gendarme kaimakam: Please, sir. I am a man."

One chapter describes Vahé's mother being raped by a Turkish soldier, whom Vahé refers to as his father. Whether it's the truth or Vahé's conception is uncertain. What matters is that it's there in his mind, part of the distillation of experience, history and imagination that has made him who he is:

"Perhaps all of the lies together will form some kind of truth about the man, the orphan, the refugee. . . . My lies are my history and they have altered with time. . . . Now I have no assurance as to what happened or did not and it matters little."

The Daydreaming Boy is dreamlike — surreal, disturbing and stunningly beautiful by turn — but its final effect is one of awakening. As the pieces of the puzzle fall together, the picture that emerges is not just of one man but of the vast machine of conflict and war that has made (or unmade) him.

Marcom's astonishing achievement is that this novel contains enough sadness to crush all hope but enough startling beauty and strength to ignite it all over again.

Jessica Slater is technology editor at the Rocky Mountain News.