

FICTION

New York Times
best sellers

■ Fiction

- 1. Beach Road** — James Patterson and Peter de Jonge. Little, Brown, \$27.95
- 2. Two Little Girls in Blue** — Mary Higgins Clark. Simon & Schuster, \$25.95
- 3. Mother: A Cradle to Hold Me** — Maya Angelou. Random House, \$9.95
- 4. Digging to America** — Anne Tyler. Knopf, \$24.95
- 5. I Say A Little Prayer** — E. Lynn Harris. Doubleday, \$21.95
- 6. Blue Shoes & Happiness** — Alexander McCall Smith. Pantheon, \$21.95
- 7. Promise Me** — Harlan Coben. Dutton, \$26.95
- 8. Everyman** — Philip Roth. Houghton Mifflin, \$24
- 9. The Da Vinci Code** — Dan Brown. Doubleday, \$24.95
- 10. Susannah's Garden** — Debbie Macomber. Mira, \$23.95

■ Nonfiction

- 1. Marley & Me** — John Grogan. Morrow, \$21.95
- 2. Don't Make a Black Woman Take Off Her Earrings** — Tyler Perry. Riverhead, \$23.95
- 3. Mayflower** — Nathaniel Philbrick. Viking, \$29.95
- 4. Burnt Toast** — Teri Hatcher. Hyperion, \$24.95
- 5. The World Is Flat** — Thomas L. Friedman. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, \$27.50
- 6. Myths, Lies and Downright Stupidity** — John Stossel. Hyperion, \$24.95
- 7. My Life In and Out of The Rough** — John Daly with Glen Waggoner. HarperCollins, \$25.95
- 8. Freakonomics** — Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner. Morrow, \$25.95
- 9. The Mighty and the Almighty** — Madeleine Albright with Bill Woodward. HarperCollins, \$25.95
- 10. Miracle in the Andes** — Nando Parrado and Vince Rause. Crown, \$25

Local best sellers

■ Fiction

- 1. Shanks For Nothing** — Rick Reilly
- 2. The Bookwoman's Last Fling** — John Dunning
- 3. The Hard Way** — Lee Child
- 4. Everyman** — Philip Roth
- 5. We Are All Welcome Here** — Elizabeth Berg
- 6. At Risk** — Patricia Cornwell
- 7. A Dirty Job** — Christopher Moore
- 8. Digging to America** — Anne Tyler
- 9. Kill Me** — Stephen White
- 10. Anybody Out There?** — Marian Keyes

■ Nonfiction

- 1. The Omnivore's Dilemma** — Michael Pollan
- 2. Marley & Me** — John Grogan
- 3. Dispatches From the Edge** — Anderson Cooper
- 4. We Are Their Heaven** — Allison DuBois
- 5. The Mighty and the Almighty** — Madeleine Albright with Bill Woodward
- 6. Wisdom of Our Fathers** — Tim Russert
- 7. Freakonomics** — Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner
- 8. Hostile Takeover** — David Sirota
- 9. Sensational Kids** — Lucy Jane Miller
- 10. Cesar's Way** — Cesar Millan and Melissa Jo Peltier

Local information from the Tattered Cover, Borders Books in Englewood and the Boulder Book Store.

Hempel offers literary treat

By Jessica Slater

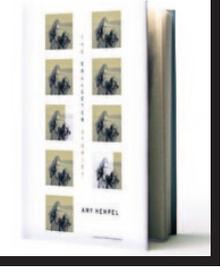
ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS

If there's such a thing as a facial expression that's equal parts grimace and smile, then that's what you'll find inhabiting your face as you read Amy Hempel's short stories.

Her work is less about character, description or place than it is about pure, unfiltered human experience. With excruciating precision, all the incongruent fragments of life are laid bare: no sympathetic lighting, no orchestral crescendos, just the absurd, brutal and beautiful moments of our lives. And that's when it appears: the half-grimace, half-smile of recognition.

The
Collected
Stories

■ By Amy Hempel. Scribner, 403 pages, \$27.50.
■ Grade: A



This collection brings together Hempel's four previously published collections of short stories: *At the Gates of the Animal Kingdom*, *Reasons to Live*, *Tumble Home* and *The Dog of the Marriage*. Reading through the complete work of this celebrated author is a literary treat.

The stories vary greatly in length, from the single-sentence "Memento" to the almost 70 pages of "Tumble Home." Hempel has perfected the art of never saying more than needs to be said, and her exquisitely crafted sentences conjure up entire worlds in themselves.

The story "Beach House" is only two pages in total, but from the first sentence, a scene is set: "The house next door was rented for the summer to a couple who swore at missed croquet shots."



SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

Amy Hempel brings together her four previously published collections of short stories.

Told from the neighbor's point of view, the narrative combines the immediacy of overheard conversations with the insight of a detached observer. After the neighbor witnesses the husband's affair and the wife's friends gathering to console her, the story ends:

"The weekend the couple next door had moved in — their rental began on Memorial Day — I heard them place a bet on the moon. She said waxing, he said waning. Days later, the moon nearly full in the night sky, I listened for the woman to tell her husband she had won, knowing they had not named the terms of the bet, and that the woman next door would collect nothing."

These stories flow effortlessly, and yet when

you map out their trajectories, they are as random as human thought: Consecutive paragraphs in "The Uninvited" skip from recollections of a high school friend who performed "telepathic duets" with a partner 2,000 miles away, to plot details from the film, *The Uninvited*, to speculations about what kind of people would steal rails from split-rail fences to make bonfires on the beach, to the mechanics of taking a home pregnancy test.

Hempel strips down thoughts and behavior to their bare bones, conjuring the humor and tragedy with the particular details she plucks out, and the juxtapositions between them:

"The bride's parents' dog came in just then and offered a frantic display of devotion, leaping about our legs. 'I used to think I wanted to be loved like that,' I said. 'But I don't want to be loved like that.' Pushing the dog away from her skirt, Jean said, 'Would it help if you thought it was insincere?' The bride, gowned, was called away for pictures."

Hempel also has an incredible knack for viewing commonplace things in uncommon ways. And then there are the one-liners, that you're almost convinced you must have heard before because they seem so natural and true:

"She said sometimes a woman thinks she wants a child when what she really wants is the father of the child." Or: "Dreams: the place most of us get what we need."

There is a seriousness about Hempel's writing that is electrifying. Her stories never feel artificial because her spare constructions of words allow the spaces in between to breathe, the light to reflect, and there you have life:

"I thought about the feeling of the long missed beat, and the tumble of the next ones as they rushed to fill the space. I sat there — in the high brace of quiet and stained glass — and I listened."

Sometimes it's as if the words themselves are listening.

Jessica Slater is assistant interactive editor for technology at the Rocky Mountain News.

'Eagle's Throne' commands a timeless view

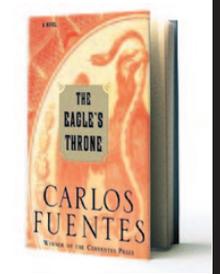
By Jennie A. Camp

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

The year is 2020. Condoleezza Rice is president of the United States, and neighboring Mexico is grappling with internal political tensions and external pressures to revise the strongholds of current Mexican President Lorenzo Terán.

The Eagle's
Throne

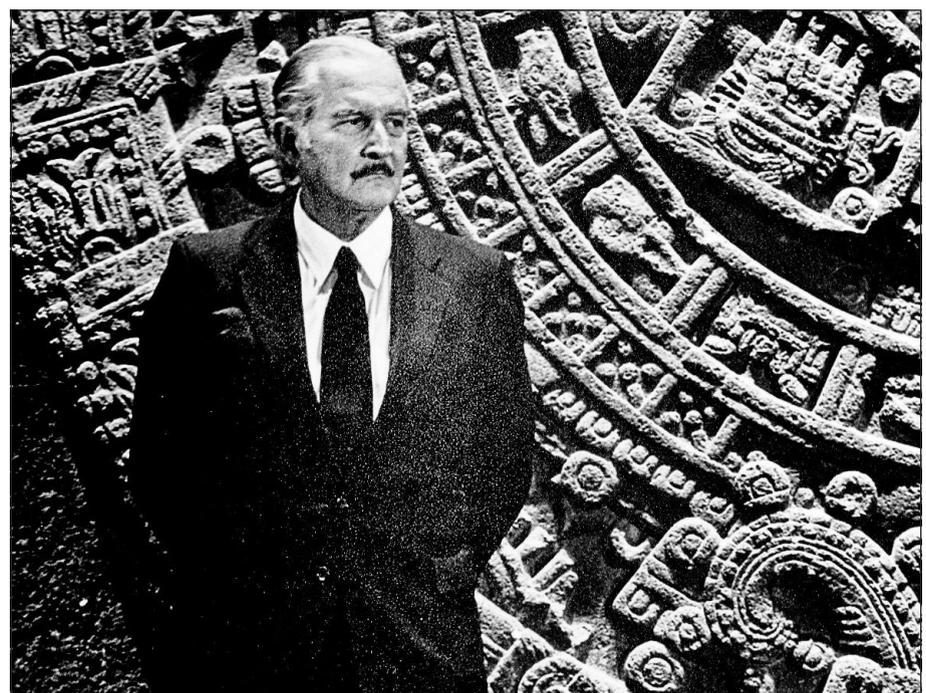
■ By Carlos Fuentes. Random House, 352 pages, \$26.95
■ Grade: B



After Terán demands the removal of U.S. troops from Colombia and insists on keeping the price of Mexican oil high, the United States cuts off Mexico's satellite communications system, leaving Mexico with no phones, e-mail, or faxes. Terán's downfall is inevitable, and Carlos Fuentes' new novel, *The Eagle's Throne*, paints an epistolary portrait of the ensuing scramble for political power.

Named for the presidential seat itself, *The Eagle's Throne* is a political thriller of sorts, toying with our preconceived notions of how we communicate, who's in charge, and how much power an individual truly has when standing up against sometimes-long-established political machinery.

Fuentes' decision to present the novel as a series of letters is meaningful, of course, given Mexico's futuristic inability to communicate. (As María del Rosario Galván, a power-hungry sexu-



Carlos Fuentes, an acclaimed Mexican author, has written more than 20 books. His latest novel is constructed as a series of letters, written in a near-future that envisions a rift between Mexico and the United States.

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

al diva, writes in the novel's opening letter: "When it comes to politics, never put anything in writing. Today, I have no other way of communicating with you. That should give you an idea of how dire the situation has become.")

And while the letters provide an intriguing means of gradually uncovering the threads of who is involved with whom and in which political direction Mexico ultimately must travel, Fuentes' epistolary form also proves to be the novel's greatest weakness. Not only is it difficult for the reader to continually shift gears with the introduction of each new writer-recipient team, but

the letters themselves frequently don't allow for the personal interplay that might further expose the motivations of the players at hand.

When treasury Secretary Andino Almazán reaffirms his support of Terán, for example, we miss the opportunity to see Terán respond in kind.

"I tell you all this, Mr. President, to remind you of what we already know. You and I make a good team. The opposition is our best friend. The more they shout at us for reason 'A,' the more budget they give us for reason 'B,'" Almazán writes.

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