

VOGUE DAILY

BOOKS

Books: Obsessed Readers

by Megan O'Grady



A trove of new memoirs explore the relationship between literature and life

On a quest to recapture her childhood infatuation with the pigtails and calico of “Laura’s world,” **Wendy McClure’s** *The Wilder Life: My Adventures in the Lost World of Little House on the Prairie* (Riverhead) details McClure’s quest to uncover the truth about the Big Woods and Plum Creek, poking a few holes in our pioneer mythology—and indulging her own butter-churning, maple-syrup snow-candy-making fantasies.

After the birth of a son with a rare developmental disorder, English literature scholar **Priscilla Gilman** turns to Wordsworth for solace and inspiration—a journey she movingly recounts in *The Anti-Romantic Child: A Story of Unexpected Joy* (Harper), a meditation on both the “passionate work” of motherhood and the wonderment of childhood.

The way in which a beloved author’s point of view can fundamentally alter one’s approach to life underscores **Lila Azam Zanganeh’s** *The Enchanter: Nabokov and Happiness* (Norton) a tribute to the Lolita author, from his perception of the natural world to his playful vocabulary, in which Zanganeh detects “the crunch of happiness.”

Reading *Emma* might be better than therapy—or so suggests former Yale English professor **William Deresiewicz**, whose latest, *A Jane Austen Education: How Six Novels Taught Me About Love, Friendship, and the Things That Really Matter* (Penguin) traces his own evolution from macho aficionado of Joyce and Conrad to devoted Austen scholar.

Coming in June: **Michael Sims’s** *The Story of Charlotte’s Web: E.B. White’s Eccentric Life in Nature and the Birth of an American Classic* (Walker) tells the story of a shy author who “felt for animals a kinship he never felt for people,” and who, at 50, drew upon childhood memories of a stable in Mount Vernon, New York, to spin the iconic story of a spider who saved a pig.

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