



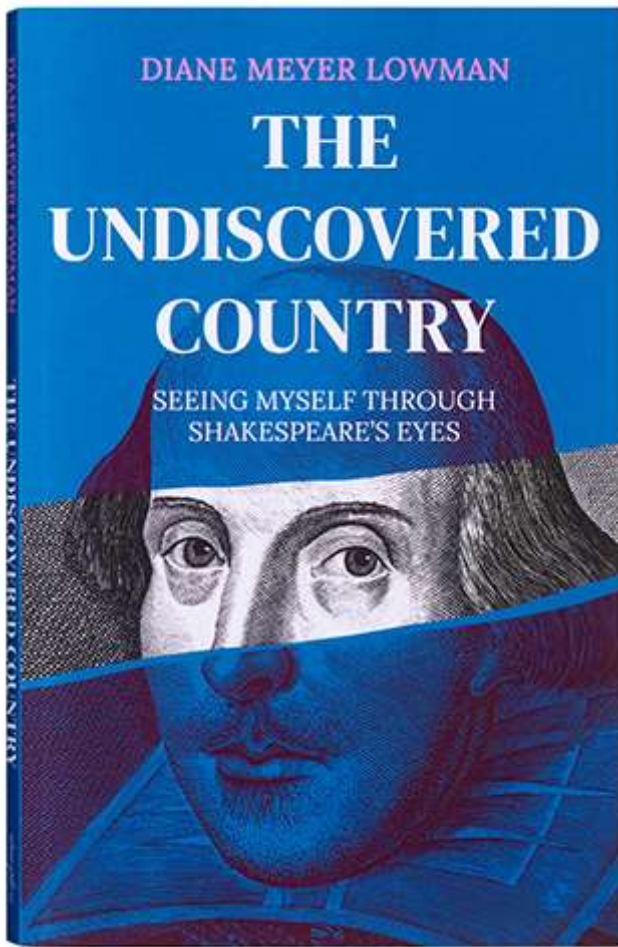
REVIEW

Editors' Picks for September and October

By Middlebury Magazine Staff

OCTOBER 6, 2023

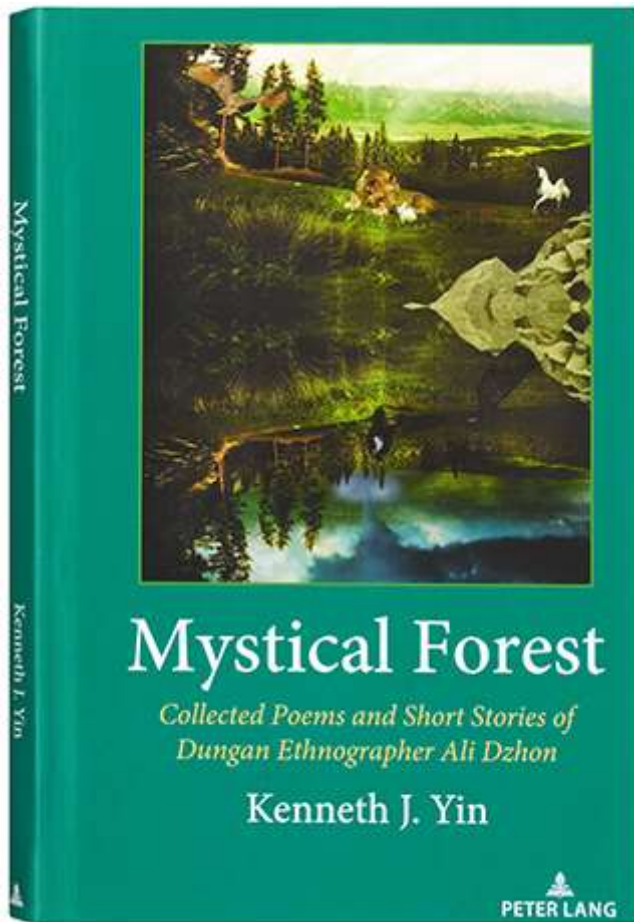




THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY

Diane Meyer Lowman

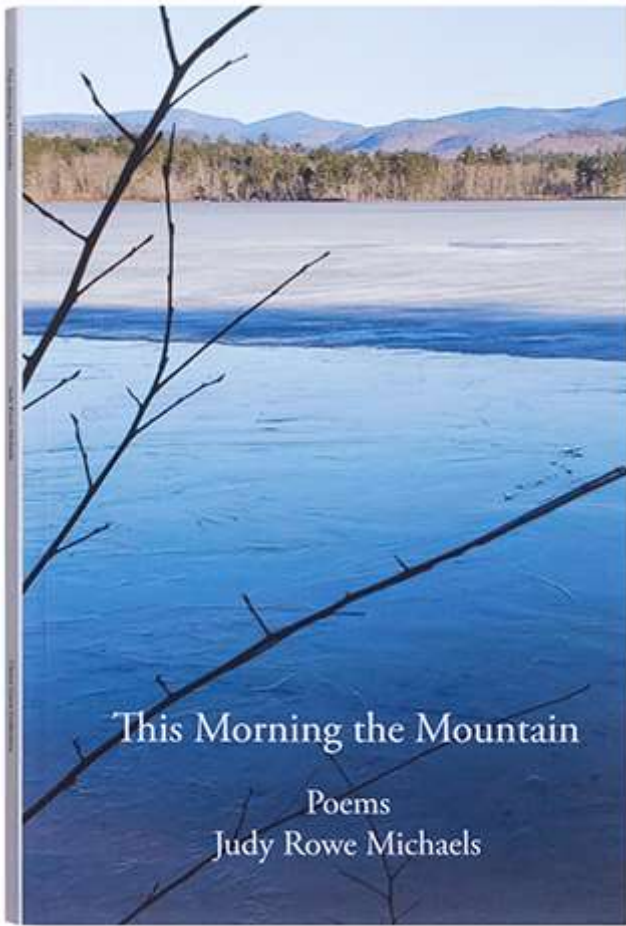
Attempting to fill a void in her midlife, Diane Meyer Lowman '81 set out on an adventure that involved selling her house, her car, and most of her possessions before going to England to work on a master's at the Shakespeare Institute in Stratford-upon-Avon, studying in the Shakespeare Studies program. What began as a year abroad pursuing an academic passion turned into a transformative experience in which she learned as much about herself as she did about the Bard. In her new memoir, *The Undiscovered Country: Seeing Myself through Shakespeare's Eyes*, she explores motherhood, as a daughter and as a mother herself; marriage and its ending; and mental illness among other things, all wrapped around the veneration that led her not only on a literary journey but helped her define herself and come to peace with who that person is.



MYSTICAL FOREST

Kenneth J. Yin

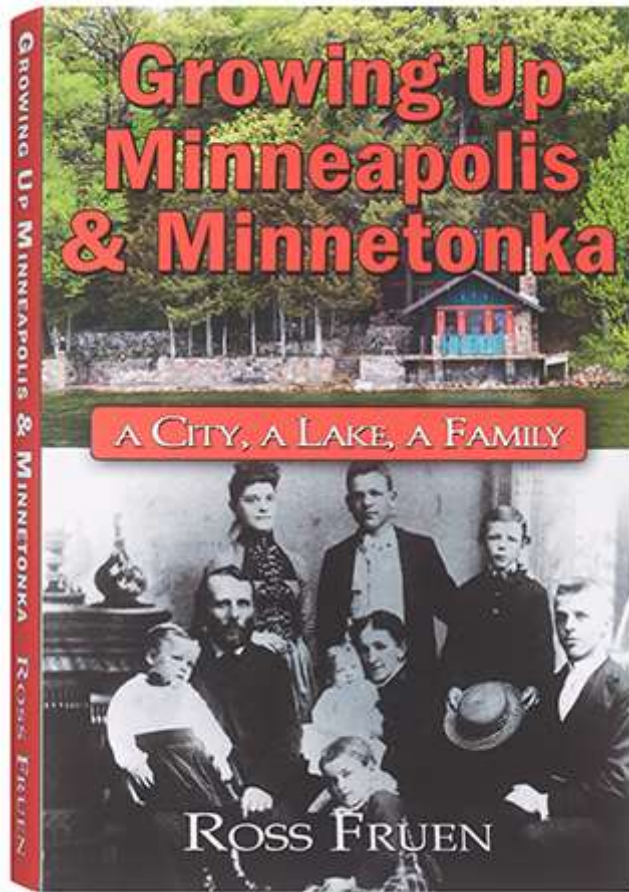
In his book *Mystical Forest: Collected Poems and Short Stories of Dungan Ethnographer Ali Dzhon*, Kenneth Yin, Russian '88–89, '91, Chinese '90 brings together in one collection the works of Ali Dzhon, considered the preeminent writer on the material and spiritual culture and history of the Dungan people, the Sinophone Muslims of Central Asia. Written over a span of more than 50 years during the late 20th century and early 21st, the poems and short stories reflect the history of the Dungans as they traveled from China to Russia in the 1870s, Dzhon's memories of his youth in Soviet Dungan villages, and the challenges and opportunities for the Dungans in post-Soviet life. Through his translation of Dzhon's works, Yin opens up the Dungan world to English-speaking readers and acquaints them with this vibrant culture through the literary prowess of a talented ethnographer.



THIS MORNING THE MOUNTAIN

Judy Rowe Michaels

Throughout *This Morning the Mountain*, the latest poetry book from Judy Rowe Michaels '66, the beautiful, heartfelt language weaves tales of love and loss, endurance, and renewal. From the first poem in the Prologue, we learn that the poet struggles with illness—ovarian cancer as it turns out, which keeps recurring. In “Ghost Note,” the phone rings to tell of a suicide, her brother Tim, found near a mountain trail. And in yet another heartbreaking poem, she lies recovering from surgery as her husband falls ill and dies from septic shock after contracting pneumonia. But her other poems offer up moments of comfort, beauty, and resilience as she speaks to her dead loved ones, remembers better times, and dwells on what can bring remembered joy. Michaels’s book is an ode to the human experience, with both its struggles and its celebrations.



GROWING UP MINNEAPOLIS & MINNETONKA

Ross Fruen

Writing part historical nonfiction, part memoir, Ross Fruen '73 tackles his family story in his latest book, *Growing Up Minneapolis & Minnetonka: A City, a Lake, a Family*. After a mix of history about the forming of the lakes of Minnesota by the glaciers, the arrival of people to the area, and the woes in Sweden during the 19th century, Fruen begins his saga with the arrival of his Swedish great-great-grandfather and family to America. The storyline from that point on follows the paths of his forebears in Minnesota, set against the growth of the American way of life. The lake comes into play when Fruen's grandparents buy Big Island's Crown Point on Lake Minnetonka, and much of the memoir aspect of the book takes place there. The history is well researched, and the more personal parts are full of intriguing stories.

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