



Prodigals: Stories

By Greg Jackson

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"People are bullets, fired," the narrator declares in one of the desperate, eerie stories that make up Greg Jackson's *Prodigals*. He's fleeing New York, with a woman who may be his therapist, as a storm bears down. Self-knowledge here is no safeguard against self-sabotage. A banker sees his artistic ambitions laid bare when he comes under the influence of two strange sisters. A midlife divorcée escapes to her seaside cottage only to find a girl living in it. A journalist is either the guest or the captive of a former tennis star at his country mansion in the Auvergne.

Jackson's sharp debut drills into the spiritual longing of today's privileged elite. Adrift in lives of trumpeted possibility and hidden limitation, in thrall to secondhand notions of success, the flawed, sympathetic, struggling characters in these stories seek refuge from meaninglessness in love, art, drugs, and sex. Unflinching, funny, and profound, *Prodigals* maps the degradations of contemporary life with unusual insight and passion--from the obsession with celebrity, to the psychological debts of privilege, to the impotence of violence, to the loss of grand narratives.

Prodigals is a fiercely honest and heartfelt look at what we have become, at the comedy of our foibles and the pathos of our longing for home.

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Prodigals: Stories By Greg Jackson Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Privileged characters confront the spiritual emptiness of contemporary life in this deeply felt and sparkingly erudite debut collection. In “Wagner in the Desert,” a writer joins a cadre of young professionals—“sustainability experts, P.R. lifers... that strange species of human being who has invented an app”—on a drug-fueled trip to Palm Springs, Calif., only to find himself deflated by “regret that we had grown self-knowing enough to avoid our mistakes.” In “Serve-and-Volley, Near Vichy,” a different writer comes under the spell of a tennis legend whose celebrity may or may not have made him insane. In “Metanarrative Breakdown,” the star of the collection, a visit by the narrator to his dying grandfather becomes an occasion for a contemplation of narrative and language: “All the words we had for everything added up to a cataloged death sentence of the discrete,” he thinks, “turning the raw matter of experience transactionable at the cost of making experience itself inaccessible.” Jackson’s exquisite insight and mandarin prose style call to mind David Foster Wallace and Ben Lerner, but his preoccupation with the demise of romance, wonderment, and spirituality in our hyper-knowing age seems entirely his own. “It was not so much information that lay beyond my reach,” one character thinks, “as a sort of presence, of shared and consummate openness, a kind of psychic nudity.” Agent: Samantha Shea, Georges Borchardt, Inc. (Mar.)

Review

“[A] fervent debut . . . with a language both hallucinatory and philosophical . . . [*Prodigals*] is a profound allegory of our addiction to success.” ?Antonio Ruiz-Camacho, *The New York Times Book Review*

“The writing in Greg Jackson’s first book of stories, *Prodigals*, is so bold and perceptive that it delivers a contact high . . . You may sometimes feel you are reading a furious, Instagram-era updating of Ann Beattie’s short stories . . . There’s also the crunch of writers like Ian McEwan and Martin Amis in Mr. Jackson’s prose. Best of all there’s that sense ? only the excellent ones give it to you ? that whatever topic the author turns his mental LED lights toward will be powerfully illuminated . . . What makes these stories radiant . . . is how invested Mr. Jackson is in peeling off the rind of life, in getting to the juice . . . ‘The passage of experience back through us’ ? that’s a powerful line, and it represents what this young writer is capable of delivering, right now and, if fortune smiles, long into the future.” ?Dwight Garner, *The New York Times*

“There are ethics at stake and, more important, crackling and careening Fitzgerald-worthy sentences that gather into Cheeveresque specimens of narrative architecture. Even stories that come apart (deliberately, in the case of ‘Metanarrative Breakdown’) feel like the work of a writer with several books behind him, instead of none.” ?Boris Kachka, *New York*

“Jackson is incredibly funny and amazingly sharp in his observations of regrets and disappointment, and the compelling stories are full of wisdom. This book has a lot of warmth in spite of the cold hard truths they tell. His characters struggle with morality in the face of a world where morals seem no longer worth having, and hopes and dreams are constantly being downgraded until they are simply stories they tell themselves to help them get through the day . . . Jackson deftly shows the nuances of adult consciousness with dark humor and compassion, and this pithy collection is a powerful debut sure to bring him recognition.” ?Liberty Hardy, *Electric Literature*

“Jackson is a virtuosic talent, and his distinctive, maximalist prose style alone will make *Prodigals* one of the

more memorable debuts of 2016 . . . This collection succeeds in addressing a generation's internal crises with remarkable comprehension and insight. In its best moments, it makes a persuasive argument for the uniqueness of its author." ?Michael Deagler, *The Rumpus*

"Upwardly mobile, young(ish), and utterly lost: Such are the characters of Jackson's short fiction. He probes them with insight and sentences so finely wrought, they verge on aphorism." ?*O Magazine*

"[A] Deeply felt and sparkingly erudite debut collection . . . Jackson's exquisite insight and mandarin prose style call to mind David Foster Wallace and Ben Lerner, but his preoccupation with the demise of romance, wonderment, and spirituality in our hyper-knowing age seem entirely his own." ?*Publishers Weekly*

"An admirable debut that cannily captures the difficulty of balancing good deeds with bad behavior." ?*Kirkus Reviews*

"Daring and innovative . . . Jackson proves himself a dexterous, compelling new talent." ?*Booklist*

"Greg Jackson's stories are deft, compact, intelligent, and beautifully aimed. The short story, in our accelerating present, has advantages over its bulkier and slower-moving rival, the novel. Greg Jackson exploits such advantages in these fractal-like captures of moments and sequences from our current disorders." ?Norman Rush, author of *Mating*, winner of the 1991 National Book Award for Fiction

"Greg Jackson is an uncommonly good writer?wickedly funny and deeply perceptive?and *Prodigals* is one of the most absorbing, intelligent, and unnervingly dead-on collections I've read in ages. I loved it." ?Molly Antopol, author of *The UnAmericans*

"This ultra-contemporary collection evokes a rarefied world of hyper-educated, over-stimulated people caught in the grip of their own privileged consciousness. Transcendence-seekers find themselves earthbound as art, drugs, role-playing, and material goods serve as temporary balms for the anomie of modern life. The elusive cure is love, and Jackson nails the way sophisticated, hard-bitten entanglements give way to sudden surges of old-fashioned romance. Jackson writes with terrific fluency, wielding Fitzgeraldian phrases as he presses through to endings full of feeling." ?Matthew Thomas, New York Times-bestselling author of *We Are Not Ourselves*

"Greg Jackson is an explosive writer, seriously funny, deeply serious.*Prodigals* is a memorable, powerful debut, full of dark splendor, and it's clear that Jackson is here to stay." ?Sam Lipsyte, author of *The Ask*

"Inventive, daring, and exhilarating, the stories in *Prodigals* offer a vital, volatile mix of style and heart, slyness and candor. Read these stories and find yourself newly awake, thin-skinned to the world." ?Maggie Shipstead, author of *Astonish Me*

"Greg Jackson's *Prodigals* is that rare treat: a narrative inquiry into the nature of narrative that is neither tedious nor tired, that takes itself just seriously enough. His lyric virtuosity is thrilling, his sensibility acute and nuanced, but it was something deeper than either of these things that ultimately compelled me in these stories: It was a genuine sense of searching?without irony or apology, with fierce intelligence?for what might constitute a meaningful life." ?Leslie Jamison, author of *The Empathy Exams*

"*Prodigals* is elegant and unpredictable. These stories of bewilderment, heartbreak and psychotropics will charm you with their humor and stun you with wisdom that's both rigorous and compassionate." ?Catherine Lacey, author of *Nobody is Ever Missing*

About the Author

GREG JACKSON grew up in Boston and coastal Maine. His work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, the *Virginia Quarterly Review*, and *Granta*. He is a graduate of the MFA program at the University of Virginia and has been a Fiction Fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center and a resident at the MacDowell Colony and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. A winner of the Balch and Henfield prizes, he was a finalist for the 2014 National Magazine Award in Fiction. *Prodigals* is his first book.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Travis McDonald:

In this 21st one hundred year, people become competitive in every way. By being competitive today, people have to do something to make these people survive, being in the middle of often the crowded place and notice by means of surrounding. One thing that sometimes many people have underestimated that for a while is reading. That's why, by reading a book your ability to survive boost then having chance to stand up than other is high. For you who want to start reading the book, we give you this particular *Prodigals: Stories* book as beginner and daily reading guide. Why, because this book is more than just a book.

Peter Chatman:

A lot of people always spent their particular free time to vacation or go to the outside with their family members or their friend. Are you aware? Many a lot of people spent many people free time just watching TV, or even playing video games all day long. If you need to try to find a new activity that is look different you can read any book. It is really fun to suit your needs. If you enjoy the book that you simply read you can spent the whole day to reading a book. The book *Prodigals: Stories* it is extremely good to read. There are a lot of those who recommended this book. These people were enjoying reading this book. Should you did not have enough space bringing this book you can buy the e-book. You can more effortlessly to read this book out of your smart phone. The price is not very costly but this book features high quality.

Adam Carter:

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Minnie Weiner:

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