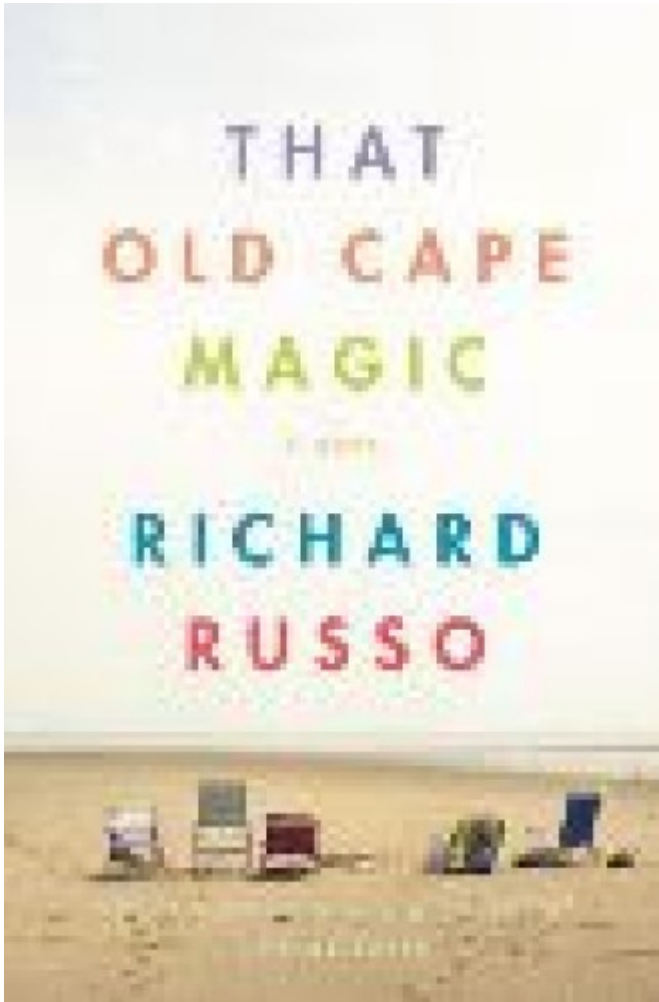


CC recommends

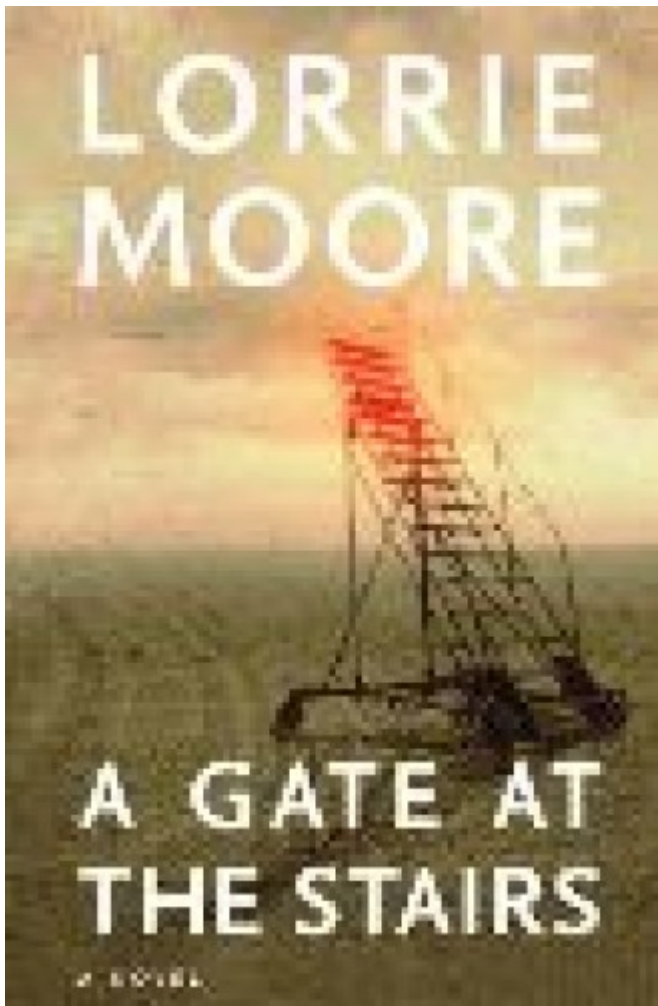
selected by [Lawrence Wood](#) in the [December 15, 2009](#) issue

In Review



That Old Cape Magic

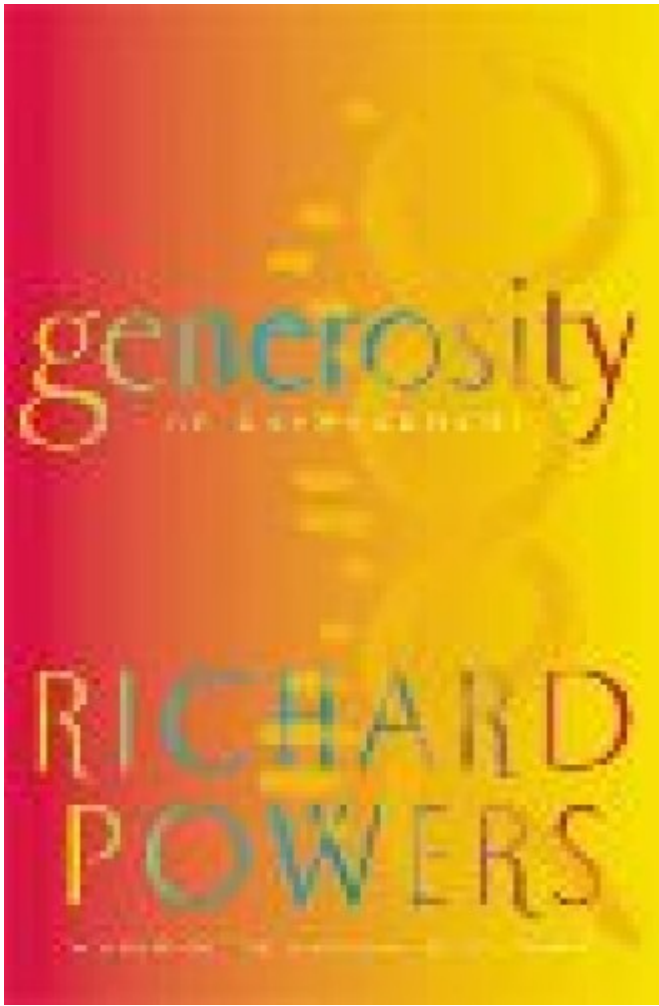
Richard Russo
Knopf



A Gate at the Stairs

Lorrie Moore

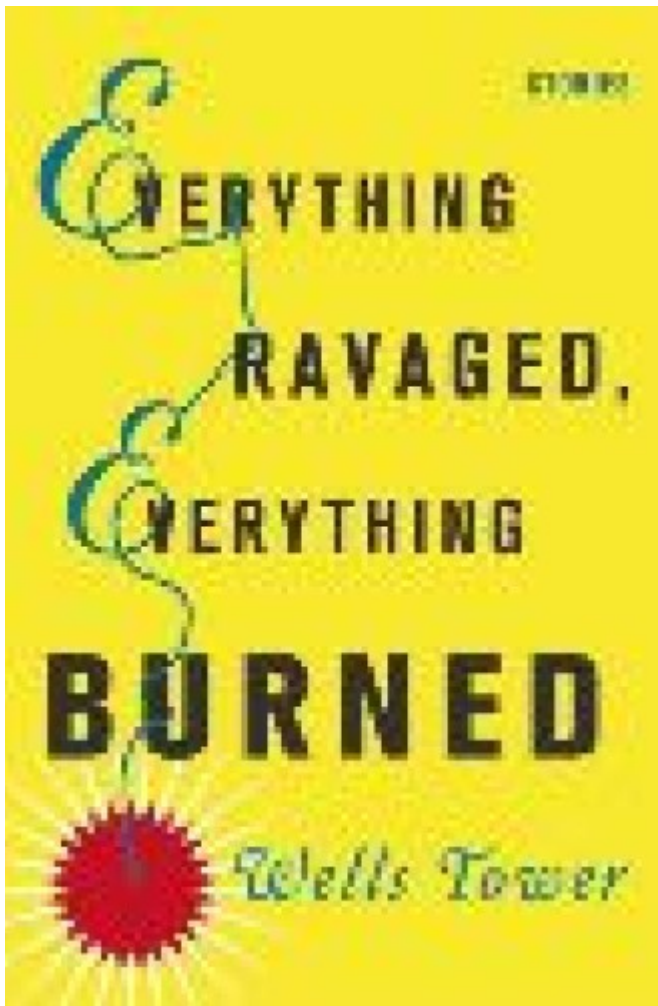
Knopf



Generosity

Richard Powers

Farrar, Straus & Giroux



Everything Ravaged, Everything Burned

Wells Tower

Farrar, Straus & Giroux



Tinkers

Paul Harding
Bellevue Literary

Russo is an old-fashioned teller of tales who can make you burst out laughing. But don't expect literary comfort food: he delights also in making readers deliciously uncomfortable. As his late-middle-aged protagonist reconsiders family life, there's plenty of occasion to squirm. (See the [full-length review](#) in this issue.)

A short-story star of the 1990s, Moore ends a long silence with this novel. The September 11 references seem forced, but the wry, self-aware characters are her specialty. At its best, this story has some trenchant things to say about race and class.

Powers is known as a cerebral writer. Here he shows his spiritual curiosity. An Algerian refugee who has seen real horrors somehow maintains unshakable

happiness. This brings her celebrity—the greatest danger yet.

No book of fiction in 2009 received more advance praise than this debut story collection. It has the same punch as Thom Jones's *The Pugilist at Rest* (written 15 years ago). Tower mixes testosterone, humor and violence, reaching a pinnacle of sorts in the long title tale about Vikings.

Harding's prose is a finely tuned, jeweled mechanism not unlike the clocks that the lead character repairs. In 192 pages Harding fits in an account of three generations and a meditation on life and death.

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