

Dinosaurs, tigers, and pop ballads

Amid the puzzles of life, there is still pleasure in learning and listening.

by [Kathryn Reklis](#) in the [December 6, 2017](#) issue

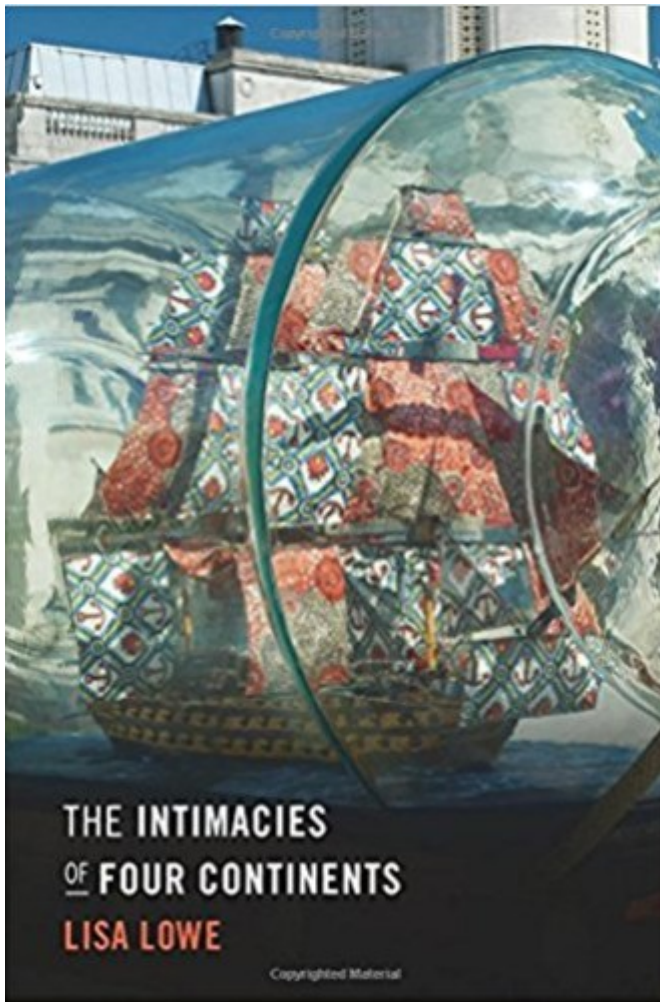
In Review



Man Tiger

by Eka Kurniawan

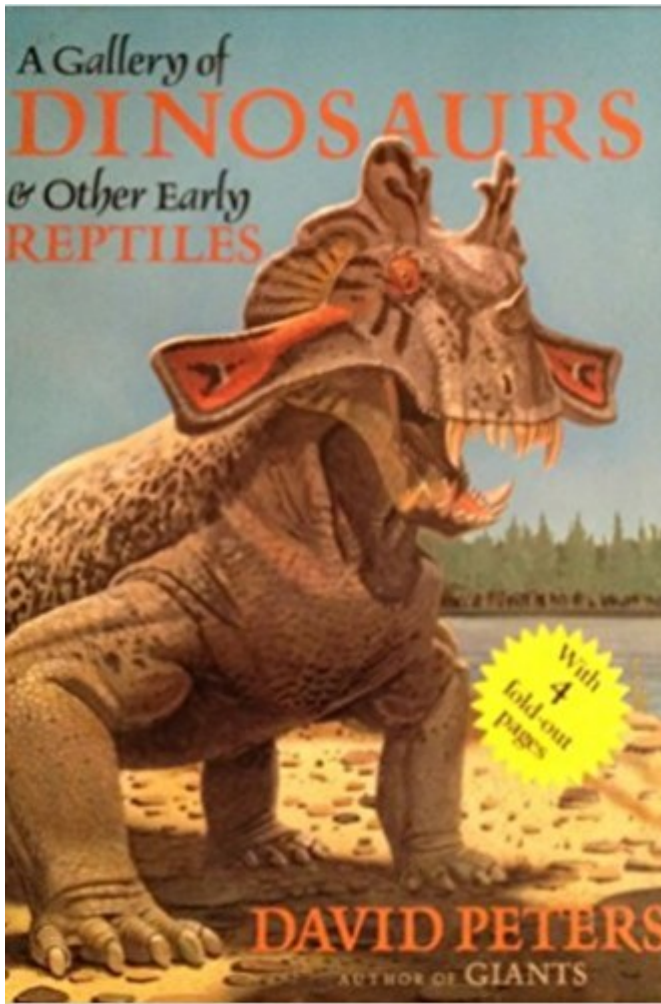
Verso



The Intimacies of Four Continents

by Lisa Lowe

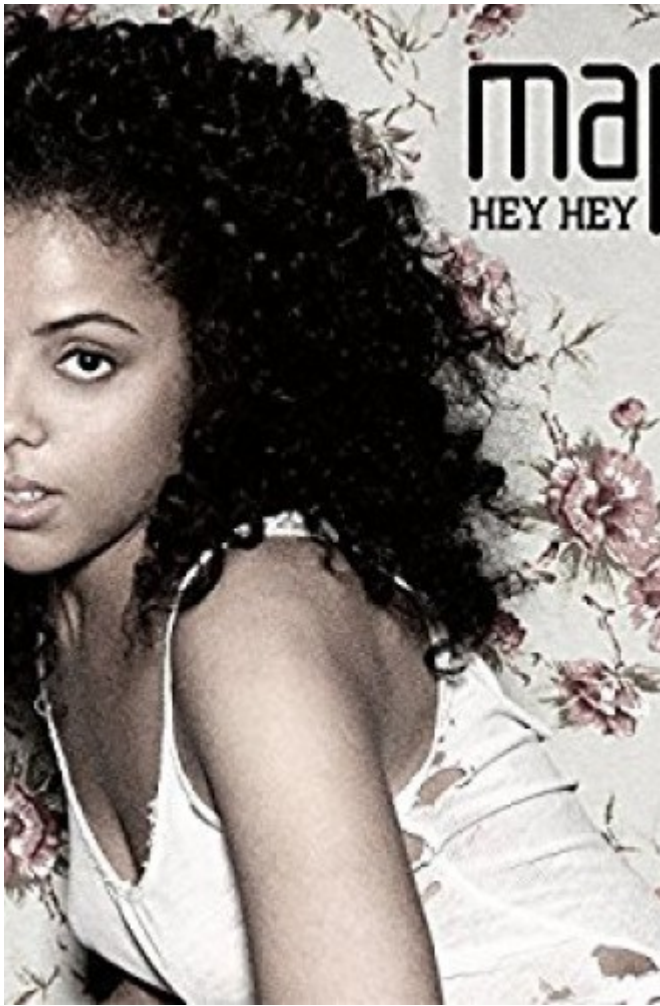
Duke University Press Books



A Gallery of Dinosaurs and Other Early Reptiles

by David Peters

Knopf Books for Young Readers



Hey Hey

by Mapei

Downtown Records

Man Tiger is a fascinating Indonesian murder mystery written by Eka Kurniawan (translated into English by Labodalih Sembiring). On the first page, the young male protagonist, Margio, confesses to killing his neighbor and the father of his girlfriend. But he claims that a supernatural white tiger living inside him did the deed. What follows is a verbally rapturous story of murder, family trauma, the overlapping legacies of multiple colonial regimes, religion, ethics, and love. It introduced me to ways of thinking and being in the world that were unfamiliar to me. At the same time, it welcomed me into the mystery of puzzling out what makes human life familiar to us all.

Lisa Lowe is a scholar of English literature who has written extensively on Asian American literature and postcolonialism. In *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, she explores the intimate connections between Europe, Africa, the Americas, and Asia that are obscured in most historical accounts of colonialism. We are not, for example, usually taught to link the end of the African slave trade with the importation of Chinese laborers to California and the Gulf coast. Or to see how the Chinese opium wars were justified by racialized hierarchies created in the West Indies. This history is not always cheerful, but it is a powerful rejoinder to the well-worn tales of East and West, Europe and “the rest,” that are clearly far from worn out.

A Gallery of Dinosaurs and Other Early Reptiles, by David Peters, was published almost 30 years ago. It is truly a gallery, with oversized pages unfolding beautiful full-color drawings of ancient creatures from before the age of dinosaurs through the early Tertiary period. The descriptions of the creatures are detailed enough to satisfy a serious science buff as well as a curious child. It was my son’s favorite book when he was four, and in the mystery of childhood repetitions, he found it again at seven and a half. Reading this book with him every night and having breakfast conversations about our favorite plant-eaters from the Middle Jurassic reminds me that there are facts to hold onto and deep pleasures in learning them with my kids.

When I put on Mapei’s 2014 album *Hey Hey* I invariably put the track “Don’t Wait” on repeat. It is a perfect pop ballad of love and friendship, layering sounds, human voices, hands clapping, and poppy synth brilliance. The invocation in the first lines (“A friend indeed, come build me up / Come shed your light, it makes me shine”) and the injunction in the chorus not to wait to act on love shape this song into an anthem of human connection and presence in a moment when we are encouraged from every side to tear each other apart.

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