

## Leapfrog: The New Revolution for Women Entrepreneurs

Nathalie Molina Niño, with Sara Grace.  
TarcherPerigee, \$16 trade paper (256p)  
ISBN 978-0-14-313220-2

While observing the existence of steep obstacles, Nino, founder of Brava Investments, dispenses approachable, energetic inspiration for women aspiring to become startup creators. Speaking from personal experience, she makes note of the discouraging effects of female and minority under-representation in business, with only 2.5% of venture capital funding going to women, of whom only about 0.2% are women of color. Her focus is on scale; through her own firm, which invests in companies that will benefit women, she aims to "level the playing field for a billion women," rather than make one woman the "next Zuckerbergian billionaire." Stating that "you have to hack the system as it is," Niño dispenses various "hacks" in five sections, successively titled "Ready," "Set," "Go," "Fund," and "Grow." They include, in "Ready," the admonition "You Don't Need a Hoodie"—understanding that the skill set associated with entrepreneurship is not limited to men—and, in "Grow," "Out-Kardashian the Kardashians"—successfully using social media marketing techniques without having to rely on celebrities. This is a must-read for any woman whose has a great idea and the nagging thought that doors are closed to her; Niño helps to blow them open. *Agent: Joy Tutela, the David Black Literary Agency. (Aug.)*

**Playing to the Gods: Sarah Bernhardt, Eleonora Duse, and the Rivalry That Changed Acting Forever**  
Peter Rader. Simon & Schuster, \$26 (288p)  
ISBN 978-1-4767-3837-6

Screenwriter Rader makes his first foray into nonfiction with this delectable tale of two feuding stage actresses at the end of the 19th century. Sarah Bernhardt (1844–1923), the better known of the two, commanded the stage, never disappearing into her roles. Wildly popular and a self-promotional genius, she transformed acting from disreputable entertainment to high art and mined her professional and private lives to invent the "eccentric celebrity" archetype. Born in Paris to an unmarried

## [Q&A]

PW TALKS WITH ADAM KIRSCH

## Why Letters Matter

Kirsch, senior editor at the *New Republic*, has edited the first edition of the letters of critic Lionel Trilling, *Life in Culture* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Sept.)

**Why publish a volume of letters from any author? And why Trilling in particular?**

Letters give you a sense of writers behind their public faces. First, they offer a more intimate look at the author. Second, they provide a historical background and context to what the author was writing about. As for Trilling, I love his work. I became interested in editing the letters as I looked at the Columbia University archives, after I wrote *Why Trilling Matters*. I found that his was a substantial archive, something waiting to be discovered.

**What surprised and interested you most about Trilling's letters?**

Most surprising were the early letters from Trilling to his wife, Diana, because they show his naked and vulnerable side. He revealed his self-doubts to her as he usually didn't to others. Interestingly, Trilling writes about problems we still struggle with today—for example, *Huckleberry Finn*. In one letter, an editor wants to replace the "n"-word when reprinting a Trilling essay, but Trilling won't allow it—he feels he needs to stay faithful to Twain's text. Reading Trilling can help us understand how people might have thought differently 50 years ago than today.

**You say in the introduction that Trilling wrote more than 600 letters per year for 50 years—how do you cull**

**such a huge number down to the 270 in the book?**

To choose, I focused on what engaged his mind, which was often politics, the issues that mattered to liberals in New York City in the 1930s, '40s, and '50s. He wanted to make liberals of his period think twice—about Stalin, for instance. You can see real historical events unfolding in real time in the letters. I also chose letters that reveal his Jewish background, although he kept it at arm's length. He never hid that he was Jewish, but he didn't want to be labeled a Jewish writer.

**Morality and political engagement were central to Trilling's thoughts about literature. Does he**

**offer any insights for our own times?**  
Trilling was definitely on the left, and interested in writing about deficiencies of the left. He wanted to explore the left's unexamined assumptions at a time when liberalism was in the ascendance. That's not like today, where the right is in ascendance. It's impossible to know what he would say today.

**What did you most enjoy about editing the collection?**

Like many people, I think there is something magical about handling paper and ink, some of it almost 100 years old. In a hundred years, when we look back to today, we'll no longer be dealing with handwritten documents.

—DIANE REYNOLDS

