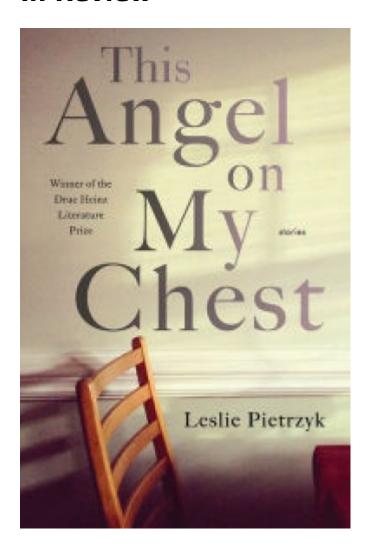
Jill Peláez Baumgaertner's Christmas picks

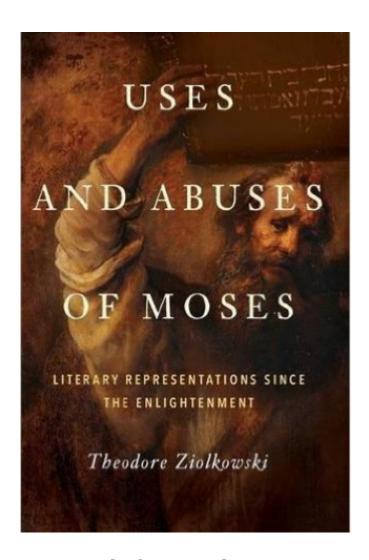
selected by Jill Peláez Baumgaertner in the December 7, 2016 issue

In Review



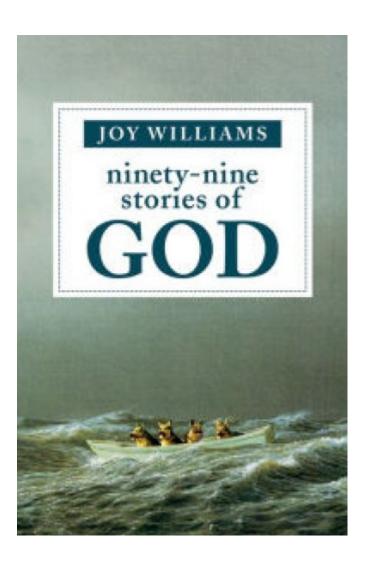
This Angel on My Chest

by by Leslie Pietrzyk University of Pittsburgh Press



Uses and Abuses of Moses

By Theodore Ziolkowski University of Notre Dame Press



Ninety-Nine Stories of God

By Joy Williams Tin House Books The last of work that constrained in the properties that the control of the formalism experience ... [Marrie] has rendered for on the grow of the control and work its language the torse."

—ALREST MOBILIO, The New Bell Thee Book Remote POEM S

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MURRAY

New Selected Poems

by Les Murray Farrar, Straus and Giroux

"We tell ourselves stories in order to live." Joan Didion's words form the epigraph to *This Angel on My Chest* (University of Pittsburgh Press), a most unusual collection of fiction by Leslie Pietrzyk. A widow at the age of 37, Pietrzyk has written 16 stories about young widows who, like her, cope with loss and grief. They've had to figure out how to keep living, the ghosts of husbands with them every day, even after happy remarriages. One woman remembers ten things only she knows about her husband; another creates a multiple-choice quiz in which there are no correct answers, only the conclusion: "You will tell the same story again and again until you know it is true." These stories are about rehearsing a death and learning to live beyond it. Each one is surprising in its own way, well-crafted, and completely heartwrenching.

Uses and Abuses of Moses: Literary Representations Since the Enlightenment (University of Notre Dame Press), by Theodore Ziolkowski, is an encyclopedic overview of a staggering number of novels, poems, plays, and films about Moses from multiple perspectives: Zionist, anti-Zionist, feminist, Methodist, Mormon, magical realist, satirical, and even cynical. The book is descriptive rather than interpretive but in all ways astonishing.

Joy Williams's *Ninety-nine Stories of God* (Tin House Books), a small, edgy collection of stories as short as one sentence and as long as a few paragraphs, presents cockeyed pictures of a god unrecognizable in any venue other than a postmodern dream. Yet somehow they draw you in, fascinating in their droll humor, cynicism, or wisdom.

New Selected Poems (Farrar, Straus and Giroux), by Les Murray, an Australian considered by some to be the finest living poet writing in English, constantly takes the reader by surprise with its versatility, its odd and wonderful angle of vision, and its artistry.

Read the other 2016 Christmas picks here.