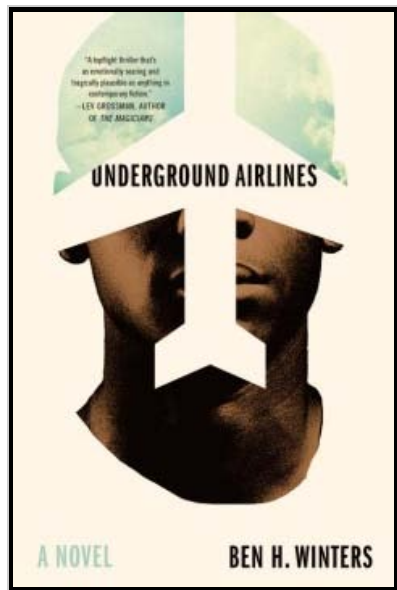


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Underground Airlines

by Ben Winters

Price: **\$26.00**(Hardcover)

Published: July 05, 2016

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Rating: 0.0/5 (0 votes cast)

From the Publisher:

Now a New York Times bestseller!

It is the present-day, and the world is as we know it: smartphones, social networking and Happy Meals. Save for one thing: the Civil War never occurred.

A gifted young black man calling himself Victor has struck a bargain with federal law enforcement, working as a bounty hunter for the US Marshall Service. He's got plenty of work. In this version of America, slavery continues in four states called "the Hard Four." On the trail of a runaway known as Jackdaw, Victor arrives in Indianapolis knowing that something isn't right--with the case file, with his work, and with the country itself. A mystery to himself, Victor suppresses his memories of his childhood on a plantation, and works to infiltrate the local cell of a abolitionist...

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About The Author

Ben Winters

Ben H. Winters is the author of, most recently, *World of Trouble*, the concluding book in the Last Policeman trilogy. The second book, *Countdown City*, was an NPR Best Book of 2013 and the winner of the Philip K. Dick Award for Distinguished Science Fiction. *The Last Policeman...* was the recipient of the 2012 Edgar Award from the Mystery Writers of America; it was also named one of the Best Books of 2012 by Amazon.com and Slate.

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What We Say

Recently I found myself reading three unrelated books that each toy with our world to give new insight into slavery and the persistent prejudice that poisons society. First, I was late to Paul Beatty's corrosively funny novel "The Sellout," in which a young black man in contemporary LA unintentionally gets a slave and then intentionally reintroduces segregation. It's an unsparing and compassionate all at the same time. Beatty's book is a satire, but don't think of the comforting distance of "Gulliver's Travels" -- think "A Modest Proposal." Next came Colson Whitehead's upcoming novel "Underground Railroad," which is scrupulously accurate and believable about life as a slave...until the Underground Railroad is revealed to be a

literal underground railroad and our reality is upended. With the slightest shift in reality, Whitehead condenses the next 140 years of Jim Crow and eugenics and the KKK and systemic brutality, making it shockingly real and surprising all over again. It's a masterpiece. And now here comes Ben Winters' "Underground Airlines." It presents an alternate reality novel, a US in which four states held onto slaves in a great compromise after Lincoln was assassinated before taking office. The time is today and our hero is a slave catcher, a black man with a chip in his spine that makes him the toy and tool of the government. He's forced to hunt down escaped slaves because anything -- anything -- is preferable to returning to that nightmarish world. Winters' novel is fresh and well-thought out and gripping as we wonder if our hero can actually be a hero. It stumbles a tad toward the end when Winters reveals an even deeper conspiracy; like Hitchcock always suggested, the vaguer one is about the MacGuffin, the better. To this sci-fi buff, the "reveal" seemed banal and not terribly convincing. But that doesn't discount the way he creates an anti-hero we fully empathize with, not to mention a world so little different from our own that you wonder if it's different at all. And surely that was the point. -- Michael Giltz

What Others Say

"This one kept me up at night and changed the way I saw the world once I was finished."âAnn Patchett, *Time* -

"Chilling"âAlexandra Alter, *New York Times* -

"*Underground Airlines* is a masterful work of art with a gripping mystery at its most basic level. It's also a complex allegory woven throughout with sparking rich dialogue and multiple shades of awareness. Passengers, fasten your seat belts. The ride may be turbulent, but that's what makes it great."âJen Forbus, *Christian Science Monitor* -

"[A] striking work of speculative fiction . . . Winters creates a powerful and timely ethical framework for his fast-moving new thriller."âJane Ciabattari, *BBC* -

"Winters reels readers in with details . . . The writing leaves the realm of noir and becomes almost lyrical. . . . *Underground Airlines* will start a lot of conversations. A lot."âBethanne Patrick, *NPR* -

"Astonishing . . . A timely novel focusing on race and equality . . . Winters handles the controversial topic...

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