

AS READ ON TV: PRIME-TIME CHARACTERS HIT THE BOOKS



On *Gilmore Girls*, Alexis Bledel's Rory lounged with Dave Eggers' **A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius** (Vintage, \$14.95) between breaking Marty's heart and making out with a work of staggering

hotness, Logan. **Plot Parallels** Eggers tells the true story of his Gilmoresque relationship with his younger brother, whom he raised after their parents' deaths, in chatty, pop-culture-laden prose. **Why It's Worth Turning Off the TV** Eggers' touching tale, told with ironic detachment, makes him the perfect young-book-geek icon (as evidenced by Rory's pinup-style poster of him).



On *The West Wing*, Martin Sheen's President Bartlet borrowed adviser Leo's copy of Ernest Hemingway's **A Farewell to Arms** (Scribner, \$13). Leo was prepping for a trip to Papa's home in Cuba, where he met with

Fidel Castro. **Plot Parallels** Hmm, why would grizzled, cynical, recovering alcoholic Leo relate to Hemingway's semiautobiographical masterpiece? **Why It's Worth Turning Off the TV** The epic romance between WWI ambulance driver Frederic Henry and British military nurse Catherine Barkley weaves love, death, friendship, and battle together with a gripping starkness.



On *The O.C.*, Mischa Barton's Marissa explored **Please Kill Me** (Penguin, \$16), Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain's oral history of punk—at the same time she explored Olivia Wilde's Alex, Newport

Beach's resident lesbian. **Plot Parallels** Alex wears CBGB's T-shirts and manages the local indie-rock venue the Bait Shop, but Marissa's rebellion is pretty innocuous—by Iggy Pop standards, anyway. **Why It's Worth Turning Off the TV** Sure, that Green Day album is good. Sure, Alex had fun purple-streaked hair. But don't you want to know what punk *really* was?



On *Lost*, Josh Holloway's Sawyer got headaches from reading Madeleine L'Engle's **A Wrinkle in Time** (Laurel-Leaf, \$6.50) and learned he needed glasses. **Plot Parallels** Is show cocreator J.J. Abrams trying to tell us

that the castaways—like the kids in L'Engle's classic—have “tesserred” into the fifth dimension to find their fathers, trapped somewhere outside of time and battling forces of evil? It's as good an explanation as any. **Why It's Worth Turning Off the TV** Unlike serialized TV, *A Wrinkle in Time* actually ends. Story resolution is so refreshing. —Jennifer Armstrong and Whitney Pastorek

tradition even as it's tempted by Western trappings. Though her debut doesn't quite match the nuance and color of Indian-American Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*, the Bangalore-based Sankaran offers a promising and intriguing *Red Carpet* ride. **B+** —Nisha Gopalan

THE TREEHOUSE

Naomi Wolf

Memoir (Simon & Schuster, \$24)



From her 1991 best-seller *The Beauty Myth* to 2001's *Misconceptions*, Wolf has long wagged her fin-

ger at Them for trying to keep Us down. Now she embarks on a very different project: a portrait of her father, Leonard Wolf. A teacher, poet, wearer of outlandish costumes, and all-around bohemian, the charismatic Leonard believes art is the answer to, well, everything. “When people spend time around my dad,” she writes, “they are always quitting their sensible jobs with good benefits to become schoolteachers, or agitators, or lutenists.” Over the course of six months, Wolf and her father build a treehouse for her daughter, Rosa. As they hammer away, Leonard teaches Wolf every-

thing he knows about writing and life. Turns out the old man knows quite a bit, and Wolf's prose surprises with humor, intimacy, and, of all things, tenderness. **A-** —Claire Dederer

BOY A

Jonathan Trigell

Debut Novel (*Serpent's Tail*, \$14)



Trigell's haunting debut (loosely based on a real 1990s case) follows a nine-year-old who commits a gruesome murder and gets dubbed by politicians and newspapers “The Evilest Boy in

Britain.” Fifteen years later, Boy A—a.k.a. Jack Burridge, an alias chosen to hide his identity from the still-outraged public—wins release from prison and re-immerses himself in a world that's unforgiving but strangely tantalizing. He discovers the opposite sex (“a new species: of legs, of lips, of breasts, of hips, of eyes, of thighs”), while still tormented by violent urges and the fear that his past will be discovered. Though Trigell masterfully builds sympathy for Jack, the story's overly ambiguous ending leaves a bittersweet ache for more. **B+** —Channing Joseph