they are building their homes by Keadlight so that, come morning, the government can't tear them down. So begins the first story Nancy has been placed under the jurisdiction of the state. With a drop of The Handmaid's Tale and a drop of The Children of Men, Erdrich cooks up a reproductive-rights thriller all her own.

A flood of spare prose courses through Megan Hunter's debut novel, The End We Start From (Grove). The big ideas keep flowing through The River of Consciousness (Knopf), by the late Oliver Sacks. Beverly Gray bangs on the glass of nostalgia with The End (Touchstone), Nicholas Hytner pulls back the curtain in Balcony Acts (Knopf), Gregory Maguire squeaks the Nibbark in Hiddensee (Morrow), Jefferson Morley eyes an agency spy in The Ghost (St. Martin's), Activism is far from static in Bill McKibben's Radio Free Vermont (Blue Rider), Photographer Jack Pierson (Domino) pictures 1980s America, and John Berendt paints a portrait of Mrs. Cold (Knopf).

Madness ensues in Matthew Weiner's Heathers, the Toddlery (Little, Brown), Juli Berwald inspects invertebrates in Spineless (Riverhead), and there's always room for Joan Silber's Improvement (Counterpoint). —S.C.