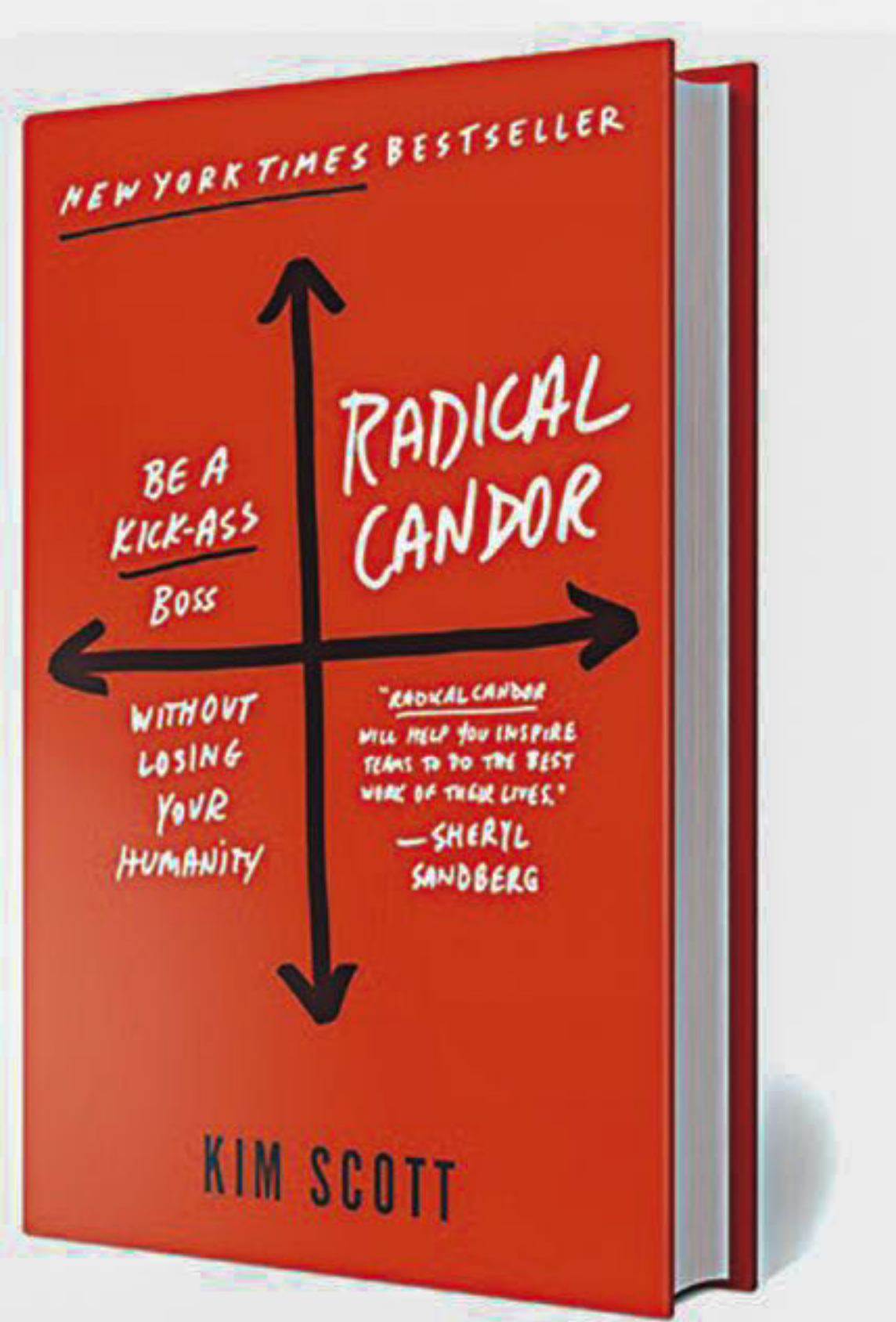




FROM THE DAILY STAR BOOKSHELF



STAR WEEKEND DESK

As 2018 wraps up, we decided to talk to some of our colleagues about the books that have accompanied them this past year. We started out trying to find recommendations hot off the press; but found out that it's been a year for older titles. While we did read some new (and amazing) releases, mostly we discovered and revisited slightly older books that have enlightened us, comforted us, and pushed us to reimagine the very process of reading books. Below are some of the favourites from our shelves that we would recommend to fellow readers.

SHAATI MARCH ER BIKEL (2018) by Selina Hossain
Elita Karim, Editor, Arts & Entertainment and Star Youth:
Selina Hossain released this book at Boi Mela earlier this year. In *Shaati March er Bikel*, the protagonist Renu witnesses the events of March 7, one of the biggest episodes of Bangladeshi history. She recalls watching not only the intellectuals

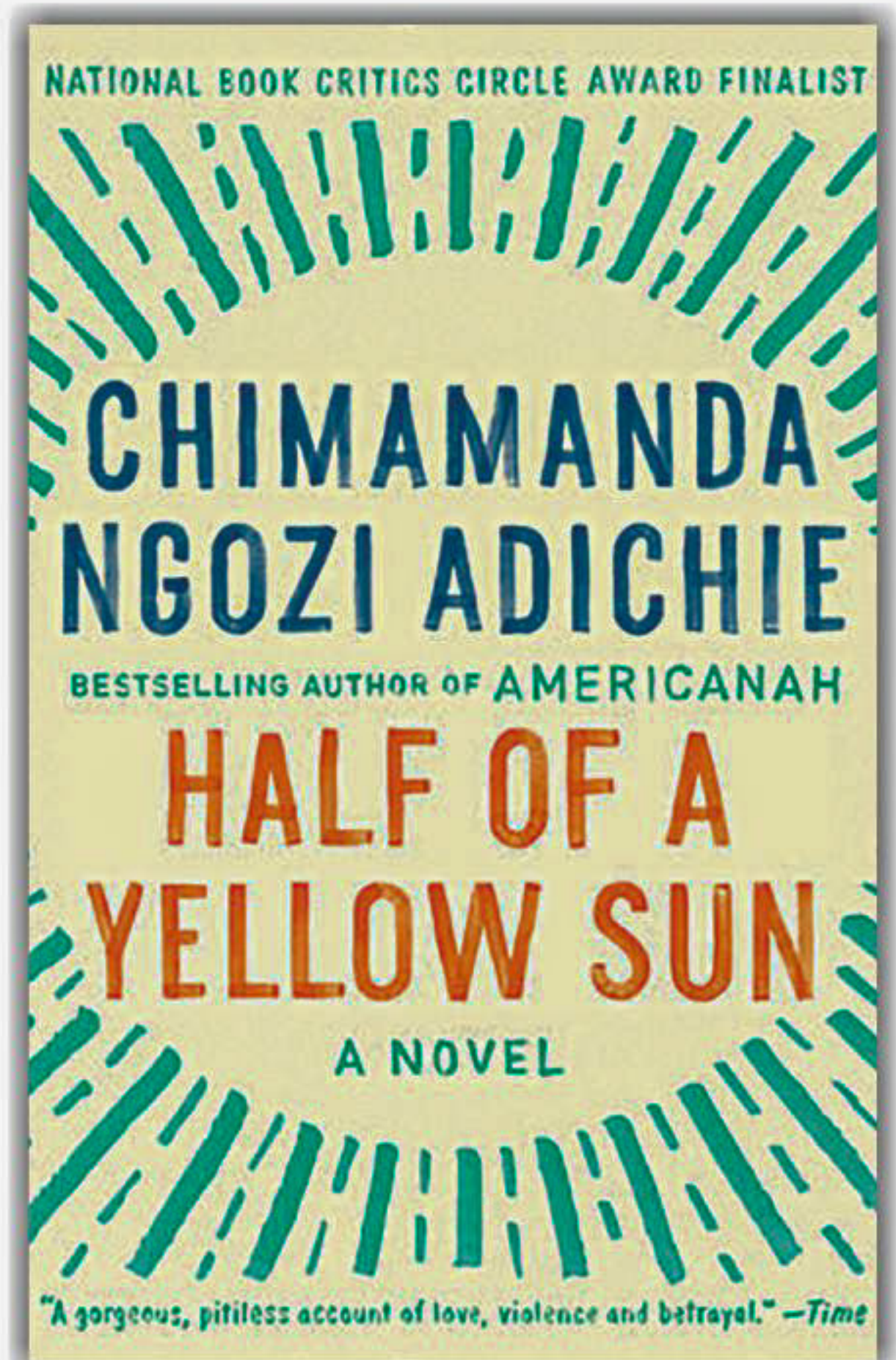
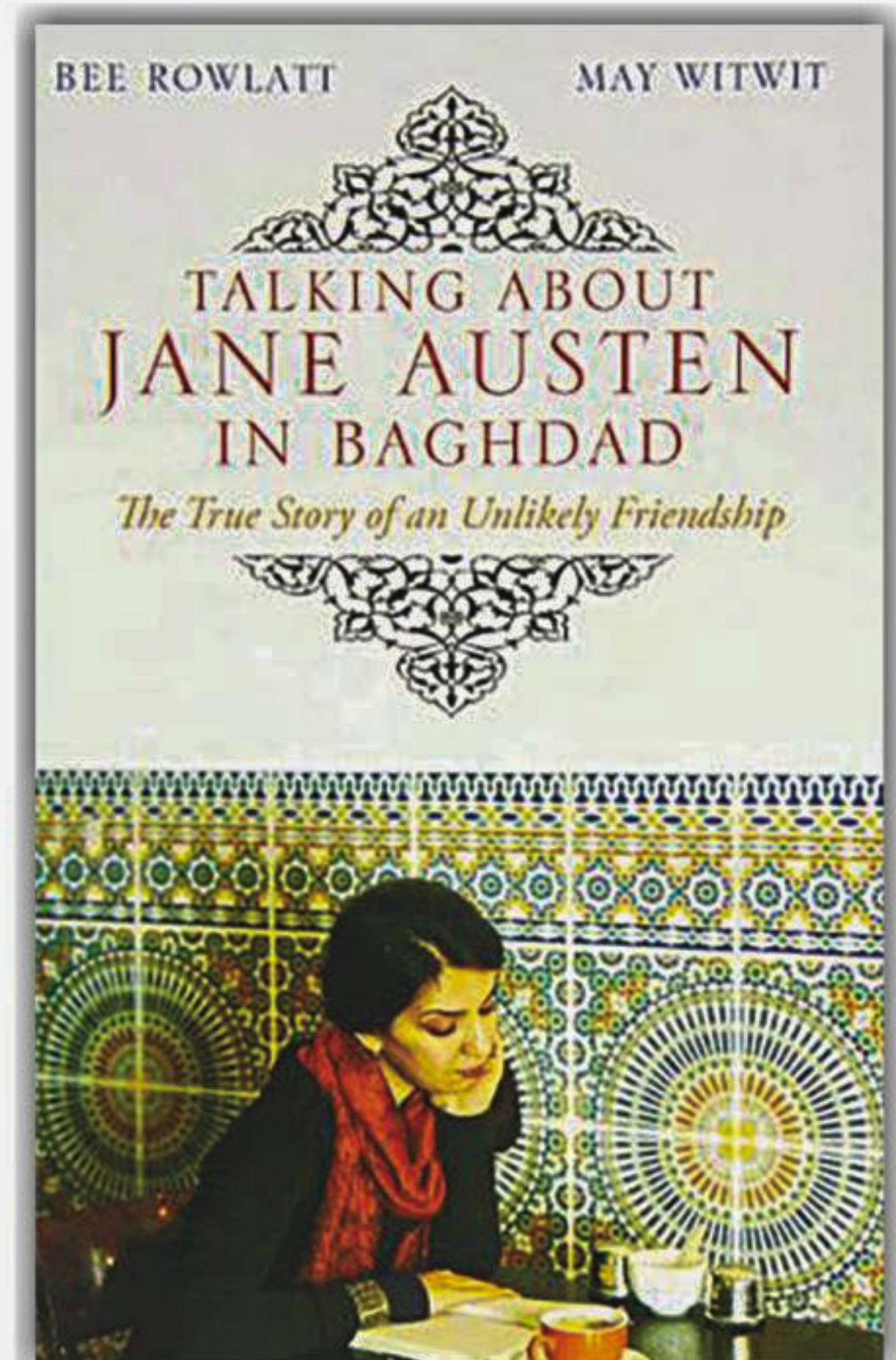
and freedom fighters, but also common citizens like street vendors join in on the rising revolution. "*Muicha geche, muicha geche* Purbo Pakistan!" screams a peanut-seller at the race course at one point in the book.

I like the book because it speaks of history and the activities of March 7. For someone who was born much later, it's an eye opener. Not only did I visualise the famous scene from the Ramna race course, but also experienced the spirit of freedom that was hovering in the air and somehow became a part groups of young revolutionaries.

FEEL FREE: ESSAYS (2018) by Zadie Smith
Sarah Anjum Bari, Staff Writer, *Star Weekend*:
Zadie Smith is just one of my absolute favourite writers for non-fiction (although I do love her novels too). *Feel Free*, her latest published in January this year, is a collection of essays on culture and current

affairs written during the Obama administration. The book is divided into five parts: In the World, In the Audience, In the Gallery, On the Bookshelf, and Feel Free. Transported into these five spaces, you join Smith in her analysis of a wildly diverse and creative combination of topics. She speaks her mind about Brexit as an alienating force; about how the rapper Jay-Z seems to channel the experimental French literary tradition of *Oulipo*, about the gardens of Rome and her writing life and the difference between pleasure and joy. "The thing no one ever tells you about joy is that it has very little real pleasure in it. And yet if it hadn't happened at all, at least once, how would we live?" she writes.

You might often not get some of Smith's references, dripping as they are with pop culture anecdotes from her own life in London and then New York. But her finesse with storytelling is such that you're intrigued enough to want to know more about these topics. It's a book brimming with her characteristic humour, optimism, and serenity; one that gets you thinking more critically, but calmly, about the state of the world.



THE MINISTRY OF UTMOST HAPPINESS (2017) by Arundhati Roy
Sumaiya Zaman, Sub-Editor, Metro Desk:
In her second novel, Arundhati Roy has two main strands. One follows Anjum, a hijra, or transwoman, struggling to make a life for herself in Delhi. The other follows Tilo, a thorny and irresistible architect turned activist, and the three men who fall in love with her. In her book, Roy introduces us to an array of characters and unveils not just one story, but many. She deftly invites her readers to view alternate experiences of living in India. From the outcasts to the untouchables, from the marginalised to the misunderstood, from the war-torn Kashmiris to the rebelling Maoists, from domestic abuse to suicide, she covers it all.