We are not, as many have asserted, driven by the unstoppable force within our genes.

intelligent consideration of the subjects at hand make it an absolute joy to read.

It is not simply that the subject of Future Sex is engaging, or important, or worthwhile, although it is all of those things; it is that Witt is a captivating and beautiful writer—I think I'd read an essay by her about sewage systems and assume that I'd finish it with not just a deeper understanding of waste management and its importance, but also a deep appreciation for its beauty and humanity. For example, am I nearly sick of hearing about online dating and Burning Man and really, hell, San Francisco in general? Yes. But I also read the shit out of this book in one weekend and felt a new tenderness toward that city and all its New-Agey, earnest, confident, overprivileged denizens. The genuine empathy and gentle curiosity with which Witt approaches her subjects are infectious. There's one strange thing: For a book that takes as its subject alternative sexuality and life paths adjacent to a nuclear family, it is surprising that it almost completely ignores nonheterosexual identities. It is decidedly preoccupied with the expectations and pressures faced not by women, but by straight women—women who are participating in a heteronormative society. This is not a weakness, necessarily—the shapes and contours of heterosexuality are worth considering in isolation—but it is a specificity that goes somewhat unacknowledged in Future Sex. The book would be made even stronger by recognizing this focus and actively pursuing its interrogation of hegemonic institutions.

—AMELIA AYRELAN IUVINO

RATING: ♥ ♥ ♥

RUMBA UNDER FIRE: THE ARTS OF SURVIVAL FROM WEST POINT TO DELHI

Edited by Irina Dumitrescu (PUNCTUM BOOKS)

Political and social upheavals often leave artworks and literature of surprising power in their wake. But what does that say about the arts? If the humanities can thrive under the direst of circumstances, should they be funded at all? (Short answer: Yes.) Rumba Under Fire collects essays that explore the relationship between art and crisis in locations around the world. Its academic style often gives way to emotionally gripping stories.

Editor Irina Dumitrescu interviews author Cara De Silva about her book In Memory's Kitchen: A Legacy from the Women of Terezin. The book collects recipes passed around orally among female concentration camp prisoners. The tradition of creating oral "books," including an entire memoir written only in the mind of a Romanian political prisoner, appears to be somewhat common among people from whom so much has been taken; other prisoners worked out a system of alphabetical tapping and were able to not just communicate but to teach one another their native languages and exchange poems.

The titular "rumba" is a catchall term for dance music in Congo, where Judith Verweijen finds soldiers waxing sentimental to pop tunes. "Oh, love...in what trashcan have you thrown compassion?" Lyrics that were once a source of wisdom have in some cases changed to reinforce the warrior's mindset, and the death tolls predictably continue to rise.

Susannah Hollister's "Counting Cards: A Poetics for Deployment" details the game she and her now-husband played while she was teaching at West Point and he deployed to Afghanistan: One would pull a card from a standard deck, the other would pull the same card, and both would tape their cards to the wall. The first rule—"Live through a week"—gives the game its heft and meaning as a way to mark the passage of time without succumbing to sentiment.

From movies that can sum up subtleties of Indian-Pakistani history more eloquently in one scene than most books, to the pleasures and pitfalls of teaching poetry to kids in Turkey (where the classics of the "Western" canon were all created somewhere off to the east), the combination of essays, interviews, and poetry make for a multilayered experience. Publishing itself is continually being described as under fire, so it's worth pointing out that Punctum Books has published Rumba Under Fire under a Creative Commons license; it's available for free download as a PDF, though of course donations are welcome. The humanities evolve to survive regardless of the circumstances, but this book makes a good case for the value in preserving and promoting them at all costs. —H.S.

RATING: ♥ ♥

TESTOSTERONE REX: MYTHS OF SEX, SCIENCE, AND SOCIETY

Cordelia Fine (w. W. NORTON & COMPANY)

Cordelia Fine has done us the great service of dismantling the supposedly scientific