Freak Chic

Someday, write economist Steven D. Levitt and journalist Stephen J. Dubner's sequel, Super-Freakonomics (Morrow), because of the real-world incentive in learning how a simple sex change can launch a woman into a higher tax bracket. Or for humanists: How deep do the roots of altruism and apathy truly go? Others may assume it's a money-management primer by the late Rick James. See, there's a little freak in all of us.

—E.S.

FIVE BETTER-THAN-SWEATER GIFT SUGGESTIONS

Josh Neufeld's account of
Katrina, A.D.: New Orleans After
The Deluge (Pompeii), rises to
greatness in the new genre of
comics with a conscience.

Colum McCann's epic Let the
Great World Spin (Random House)
evokes the summer of 1974, when a
Frenchman on a tightrope
united New Yorkers.

Lorrie Moore's post-9/11
bildungsroman, A Gate at the
Stairs (Knopf), is a richly imagined,
whirlwind tour de force.

Ever political, and scarily
practiced, Margaret Atwood envisions
apocalypse civilizations forged in
the wake of an environmental
cataclysm in The Year of the Flood
(Nan A. Talese).

Trey Ellis's inspirational
Strength in What Remains (Random
House) chronicles the true-life
struggles of a young Burundian
man who flees civil war for
uncertainty in America.