to a disappointing conclusion. *(Nov.)*

★ The Financial Lives of the Poets

Jess Walter. Harper, $25.99 (304p) ISBN 978-0-06-191604-5

National Book Award–finalist Walter does for the nation's bleak financial landscape what he did for 9/11 in *The Zero*: whip-smart satire with heart. Matt Prior quits his job as a business reporter to start Poetfolio.com, a Web site featuring poetry about finance, or "money-lit." Unsurprisingly, it tanks, and Matt returns to the newspaper, only to be laid off with a meager severance package. Now not only are the Priors in danger of losing their house, but Matt is convinced that his wife, Lisa, is having an affair with an old boyfriend she rediscovered during her lengthy nightly Facebook sessions. With two sons in overpriced Catholic school and his increasingly senile father to support, Matt's bank accounts dwindle amid his financial planner's dire predictions (diagnosis: "fiscal Ebola"). When an appealing but illegal moneymaking opportunity presents itself, Matt jumps at the chance. The decision to include snippets of Matt's poetry in the novel was a risky one, but Walter pulls it off, never resorting to pretension or overused metaphors for life's meltdowns. *(Oct.)*

history professor. But the narrator's main focus, in the most engaging passages, is three prominent figures: Christopher Columbus, Sir Walter Raleigh and Frederick Law Olmsted. Quotations and photographs flesh out learned reflections, but Howard's digressions are too lacking in direction to hold our attention through the endless high-brow references. The marks of a master—beautiful prose and ambitious structure—are not enough to hold together the rich strands of this patchwork novel. *(Oct.)*

Breaking the Rules

Barbara Taylor Bradford. St. Martin's, $27.99 (432p) ISBN 978-0-312-57806-0

For the 30th anniversary of her first novel, *A Woman of Substance*, Bradford delivers her 25th book. The riches-to-more-riches tale features beloved matriarch Emma Harte's plucky great-granddaughter, M, who, at 23, moves to New York to start a modeling career, banking on her intelligence and business savvy, her Audrey Hepburn looks and her well-connected friends to help her. A violent attack had compelled M to leave behind a life of privilege in London, and from her new home in a shared Chelsea brownstone, M begins her ascent, eventually landing on the catwalks of Paris and falling in love with a famous British actor, though her successes soon attract the at-