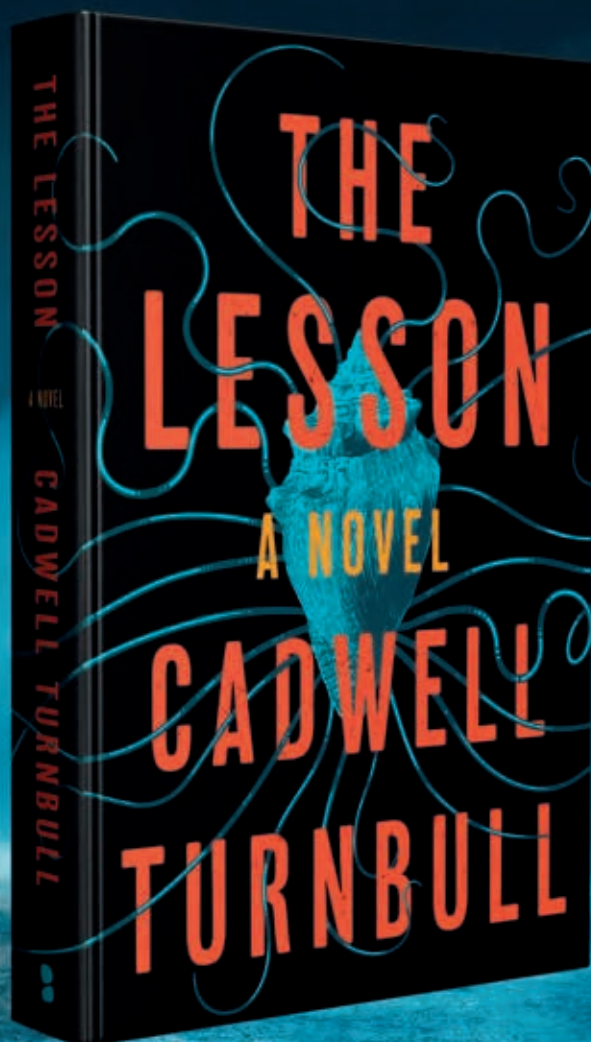


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- Turnbull is a graduate of North Carolina State University's Creative Writing Program; he has an MFA in Fiction and English and an MA in Linguistics
- Winner of the 2014 NCSU Prize for Short Fiction
- Turnbull's short stories have been published in *Nightmare*, *Lightspeed*, and *Asimov's Science Fiction*
- His *Asimov's* short story *When the Rains Come Back* made Barnes and Noble's Sci-Fi & Fantasy Short Fiction Roundup in April 2018
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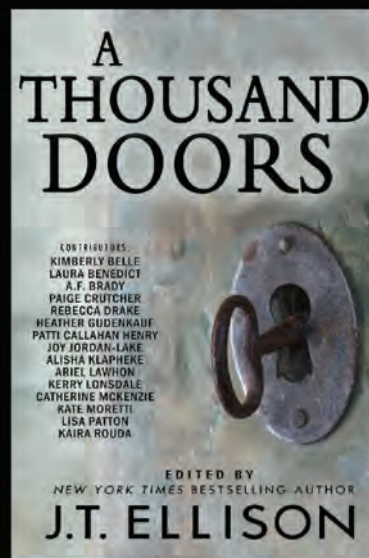


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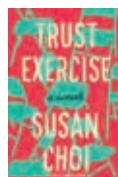
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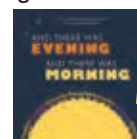
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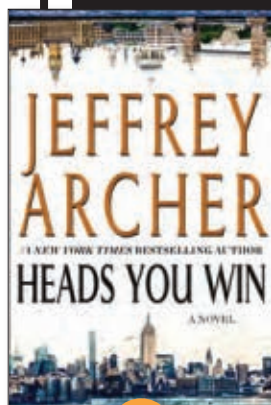




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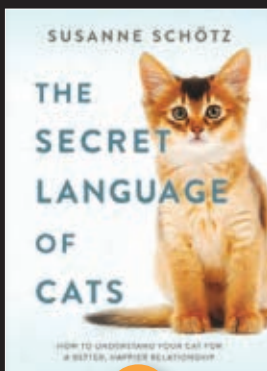
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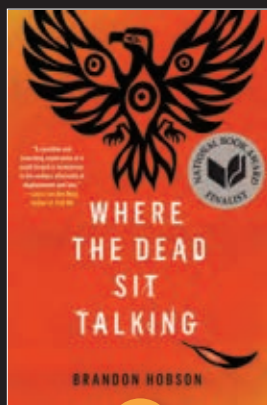
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From the Newsletters

Tip Sheet

Samantha Harvey, author of *The Western Wind*, examines how novelists solve problems when writing historical fiction.
publishersweekly.com/samanthaharvey

Children's Bookshelf



YA author Sarah Dessen has moved to HarperCollins.
publishersweekly.com/sarahdessen

Global Rights Report

Erin Morgenstern, author of the 2011 best-seller *The Night Circus*, sold North American rights to *The Starless Sea* to Jenny Jackson at Doubleday.
publishersweekly.com/erinmorgenstern

BookLife Report

Michelle Argyle at Melissa Williams Design reimagines the cover of *Spinning* by indie author Janine Kovac.
publishersweekly.com/janinekovac

Religion BookLine

Bob Munce of the newly formed Christian

Retail Association hopes to both liven up the industry and attract retailers with lower annual membership dues and innovative programs.
publishersweekly.com/bobmunce

Podcasts

Week Ahead

PW senior writer Andrew Albanese reflects on the National Book Awards and how Michelle Obama's blockbuster memoir might jump-start what is expected to be a strong holiday season for bookstores.
publishersweekly.com/weekahead

More to Come

Writer Jason Sacks talks about his new book, *American Comic Book Chronicles: The 1990s*, and about comics in the '90s, from the Image explosion to "Marvelcution." He also talks about running the *Comics Bulletin* website.
publishersweekly.com/moretocome

LitCast

We interview scientist Daniel Botkin about his novel *Tsavo*, which presents differing perspectives on wildlife conservation.
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FaithCast

Gary Jansen, an author at Loyola Press,

discusses his contribution to *Sharing the Wisdom of Time*, a collection of stories from Pope Francis and other elders from around the world.

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Blogs

ShelfTalker



A book buyer shares how bookstores can go beyond Sherman Alexie when selling books by Native American authors.
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PW Insider

This year's National Book Awards were unique for many reasons. PW associate news editor John Maher recaps the event, and deputy reviews editor Gabe Habash talks about the books.
publishersweekly.com/pwinsider10



Publishing Honors Its Best

The 69th National Book Awards were presented at a gala in Manhattan last week, and a diverse slate of first-time nominees took home medals

At the 2018 National Book Awards ceremony, held at Cipriani Wall Street in Manhattan on November 14, much of the political fervor underpinning the past two ceremonies was again on display.

The evening began with the Literarian Award for Outstanding Service to the American Literary Community, given to Doron Weber, v-p and program director at the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. In his speech, Weber said he was especially proud of his ability to use Sloan funding to support women writers and writers from marginalized communities. “I don’t have to remind you that, especially today, we need to safeguard creative freedom for writers of every stripe,” he said. “We must defend their rights, or lose them.”

The second lifetime achievement award of the evening, the Medal for Distinguished Contributions to American Letters, was awarded to Chilean-American author Isabel Allende, the first Spanish-language author and second not born in the United States to receive the award. Allende, in an emotional speech, accepted the award “on behalf of millions of people like myself who have come to this country in search of a new life.” She then added, “This is a dark time, my friends. It is a time of war in many places and potential war everywhere—a time of nationalism and racism. I write to preserve memory against the ocean of oblivion and to bring people together. I believe in the power of stories.”

The five category prizes each went to first-time nominees, and all went to writers of color. Elizabeth Acevedo, author of *The Poet X*, won the National Book Award for Young People’s Literature. “I walk through the world with a chip on my shoulder,” she said in her acceptance speech. “I go into so many spaces where I feel like I have to prove that I’m allowed to be in that space—as a child of immigrants, as a black



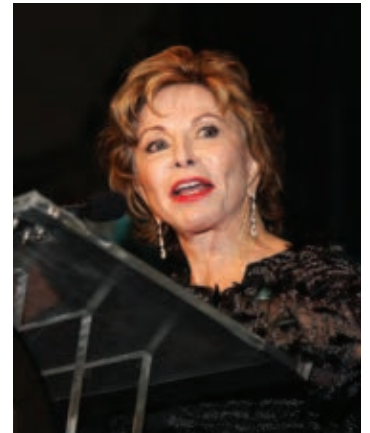
Elizabeth Acevedo won the award for Young People’s Literature.



Jeffrey C. Stewart took home the award in the nonfiction category.



Sigrid Nunez (r.), fiction winner, with her editor, Sarah McGrath of Riverhead Books.



Isabel Allende was given the Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters.

woman, as a Latina, as a person whose accent holds certain neighborhoods, whose body holds certain stories.”

The winner of the first National Book Award in Translated Literature was Yoko Tawada for *The Emissary*, translated from the Japanese by Margaret Mitsutani. Tawada could not be in New York for the ceremony, so a representative of the author, writer Monique Truong, read a note from her: “I think it’s great that the translated literature category for the National Book Awards has been resurrected.” (There was, once, a National Book Award for Translation, which was cut in 1983.) “Translation,” the note continued, “gives a book wings to fly across national borders.”



Monique Truong (l.) accepted the translated literature award on behalf of Yoko Tawada. With her are translator Margaret Mitsutani and Harold Augenbraum, past NBA executive director and presenter of the new award.



Justin Phillip Reed, winner of the poetry award, with his editor, Erika Stevens of Coffee House Press.

Poetry winner Justin Phillip Reed accepted the award for *Indecency* in honor of his grandfather. “I am standing here with ancestral hands on my shoulders still not knowing what to make of this epithet, ‘winner of the National Book Award for Poetry.’”

Jeffrey C. Stewart, the winner of this year’s award in nonfiction, for *The New Negro: The Life of Alain Locke*, said he was shocked. “I have to say, it’s unbelievable to me that the scholars and readers chose this book, and that the National Book Foundation exists—especially in the times we live in, in which many people just don’t read,” Stewart said.

The final award, for fiction, went to Sigrid Nunez for her book *The Friend*. “I became a writer not because I was seeking community but rather because I thought it was something I could do alone, and hidden, in the privacy of my own room,” she said. “How lovely to realize that writing books made the miraculous possible: to be removed from the world and to be part of the world at the same time. And tonight, how happy I am to be part of the world.”

—John Maher

The Weekly Scorecard

Unit Sales Dropped 5.3% in Early November

Unit sales of print books fell 5.3% in the week ended Nov. 10, 2018, compared to the similar week in 2017, at outlets that report to NPD BookScan. Sales were down in all major categories except for young adult. The widespread decline is likely due in part to distractions caused by the midterm elections that were held on November 6. Last year at this time, there was no particular blockbuster that drove overall unit gains. The top-selling overall title in the week ended Nov. 11, 2017, was *The Getaway (Diary of a Wimpy Kid #12)* by Jeff Kinney, which sold more than 203,000 copies in its first week. In the week ended Nov. 10, 2018, *Whose Boat Is This?* by the staff of *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* was the #1 title, selling about 209,000 copies in its first full week out. That performance was not enough to prevent unit sales in the adult nonfiction segment from falling 4.3% compared to 2017. The segment also had another strong seller: *Homebody* by Joanna Gaines, which sold nearly 94,000 copies, but sales of other top titles were soft. Unit sales of adult and juvenile fiction both fell 6.7% compared to 2017. The juvenile category was affected by the debut last year of *The Getaway*. The #1 seller in the category this year was Kinney’s *The Meltdown*, which sold just under 150,000 copies in its second week. In adult fiction, the #1 seller in the most recent week was *Past Tense* by Lee Child, which sold almost 70,000 copies. Last year, Child’s *The Midnight Line* sold close to 77,000 copies. Sales of juvenile nonfiction fell 5.8% compared to 2017.

TOTAL SALES OF PRINT BOOKS (IN THOUSANDS)

	NOV. 11, 2017	NOV. 10, 2018	CHGE WEEK	CHGE YTD
Total	13,128	12,427	-5.3%	1.6%

UNIT SALES OF PRINT BOOKS BY CATEGORY (IN THOUSANDS)

	NOV. 11, 2017	NOV. 10, 2018	CHGE WEEK	CHGE YTD
Adult Nonfiction	5,138	4,915	-4.3%	4.5%
Adult Fiction	2,427	2,264	-6.7%	-4.7
Juvenile Nonfiction	1,130	1,064	-5.8%	6.2%
Juvenile Fiction	3,531	3,293	-6.7%	0.5%
Young Adult Fiction	335	337	0.3%	-3.7%
Young Adult Nonfiction	33	36	7.3%	8.6%

UNIT SALES OF PRINT BOOKS BY FORMAT (IN THOUSANDS)

	NOV. 10, 2017	NOV. 11, 2018	CHGE WEEK	CHGE YTD
Hardcover	4,367	4,141	-5.2%	5.0%
Trade Paperback	6,344	5,932	-6.5%	-0.3%
Mass Market Paperback	1,003	918	-8.5%	-2.8%
Board Books	725	763	5.2%	9.5%
Audio	60	40	-33.7%	-27.1%



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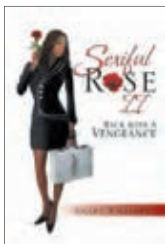


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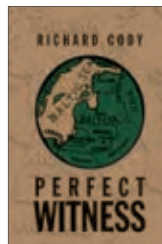


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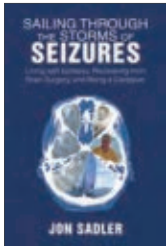
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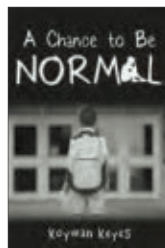
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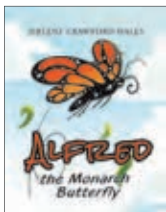
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Lightning Source Turns 20

John Ingram, chairman of Ingram Content Group, said his inspiration to create what would become Lightning Source occurred after he attended a BookExpo America show in the mid 1990s where Xerox was showing off its DocuTech machine, a huge printer that could quickly produce a single copy of a book. Back at Ingram's La Vergne, Tenn., warehouse, he asked Y.S. Chi, who was then the company's CEO, "Why in the world are we wallpapering the warehouse with books? Wouldn't it be better to store a digital file and print a book when there was demand?"

Chi took his boss's suggestion to heart and hired Larry Brewster to develop a business model. In 1998, Lightning Source printed its first book: *Hanged Man*, published by Kensington.

That first book was printed as a black-and-white paperback in La Vergne. Twenty years later Lightning Source has plants in Fresno, Calif.; Fairfield, Ohio; and Breinigsville, Pa., in addition to its La Vergne location. At all sites, Lightning Source's digital platform consists exclusively of HP PageWide HD color and mono presses, said Kelly Gallagher, v-p, content acquisition for the Ingram Content Group, allowing Lightning Source to print color and hardcover books.

Gallagher acknowledged that Lightning Source was not an immediate success: "In the first few years, the print-on-demand concept had a slow ramp-up, as publishers tried to wrap their heads around the idea of new concepts like 'inventory free' and 'print to order,' along with a belief that the consumer

would question the difference in quality." But, he noted, as results started coming in and publishers were able to keep backlist titles in stock indefinitely while growing their sales, they began to embrace POD. Lightning



John Ingram

Source printed its one millionth book in 2000, and, as publishers and authors started coming aboard at a more rapid clip, it printed its 10 millionth book just three years later.

As Lightning Source and POD began to be accepted in the U.S., Ingram opened

its first overseas operation in the U.K. in 2001. Lightning Source now owns print and distribution centers in Milton Keynes, U.K., and Melbourne, Australia, and is in a joint venture with Hachette Livre in France. Ingram upped its international presence again in 2011 when it launched Global Connect, a program in which Lightning Source partners with companies abroad that offer print-on-demand and distribution services. Lightning Source currently has deals in place with companies in eight countries, and under the program, a publisher in the U.S. or U.K. can send a file to a Lightning Source partner, who will print and ship the book in its country and conduct the transaction in local currency.

In 2008, the Lightning Source print library surpassed the one-million-title mark for the first time, and, 10 years later, the company's global catalogue exceeds 15 million titles, Gallagher said. Lightning Source's title count has grown, in part, because the subsidiary has evolved its business to keep pace with industry changes. According to Gallagher, Lightning Source's clients

come from all publishing segments and include publishers of all sizes—from single-book author to the world's largest publisher. "We also support frontlist bestsellers where the publisher suddenly discovers it is out of stock and needs a GAP printing, which is a backup print/distribution service for titles that should be physically available but run out of stock due to demand shocks," he noted.

Steve Zacharius, who helped facilitate the printing of *Hanged Man* and is now president of Kensington, said Kensington uses Lightning Source like most publishers: "We use it for short runs to cover books temporarily out of stock or to keep the book available when there's not enough demand to do a full offset printing. We also, of course, use it for ARCs."

Lightning Source has also been front and center in the self-publishing boom. Gallagher noted that, though Lightning Source always worked with small presses and self-published authors, the launch five years ago of IngramSpark, which is aimed at indie authors, "has brought our engagement with independent and self-publishers to a whole new level."

As Lightning Source has grown and changed, one thing that remains the same is its basic functionality: the ability to print one copy of a book at a time. Asked whether there is such a thing as an average print run, Gallagher observed, "As a print-on-demand printer and distributor, Lightning Source is engineered to print efficiently to a unit of one, so our average print run is actually not much more than that."

But, he added, its new equipment is perfectly able to handle print runs into the thousands.

For all of Lightning Source's success, John Ingram believes that most publishers are only using a fraction of what POD has to offer. "If I could tell publishers one thing, it would be to give us a file of every book they have," he said. "That way, when something happens and a book unexpectedly becomes in demand, we can quickly fill immediate orders while the publisher develops a larger printing plan."

Ingram said he is excited by the success of Lightning Source ("It is an important, serious business for us") because he likes businesses that are incentivized to be aligned with its clients' needs. "We only do well if our clients do well," he added.

—Jim Milliot



McKinsey & Company

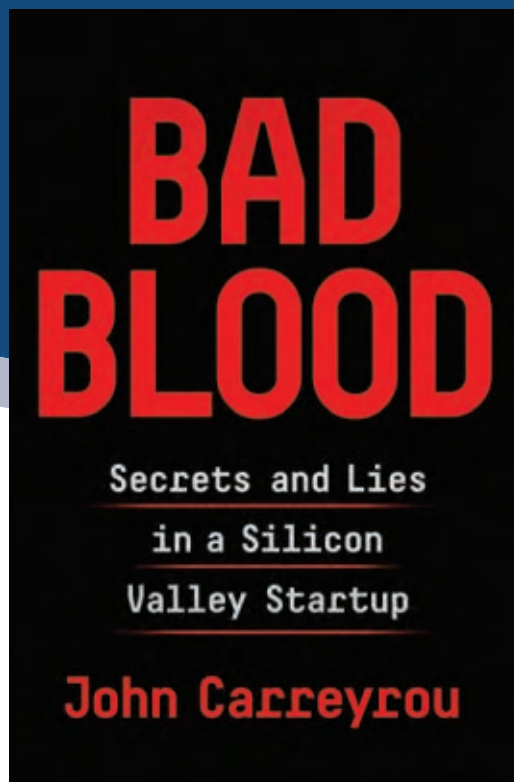
Congratulations to John Carreyrou

Winner of the 2018 Business Book of the Year Award

John Carreyrou's book, *Bad Blood: Secrets and Lies in a Silicon Valley Startup*, is the winner of this annual award which recognizes "the most compelling and enjoyable insight into modern business issues, including management, finance and economics".

For more information on the winning book and award finalists, please visit:

www.ft.com/bookaward



In South Korea, Booksellers Look for Ways

Walking through the front doors of Seoul's Kyobo Book Center, the best-known bookstore in South Korea, the first thing I see are two 40-foot-long tables, each made of 45,000-year-old Kauri wood from New Zealand. On a rainy Thursday afternoon in November, there are nearly 100 people seated at the tables reading, working on computers, and swiping at cell phones.

With 10 stores across the country, Kyobo is one of the most established bookstore chains in South Korea. The flagship Book Center store, in Seoul's historic center, is spread across numerous floors of a skyscraper owned by its parent company, the Kyobo insurance company. The Book Center covers more than 100,000 sq. ft. of retail space and stocks some 210,000 titles—of which 14,000 are in English and another 10,000 are in Japanese and other languages. Though the store is teeming with activity on my visit, not all is well.

"Book sales in Korea are steadily in decline, of 3%–4% a year," said Han Woo Lee, CEO of Kyobo, who blamed the ubiquity of high-speed internet as one reason for the decline.

That theory was echoed by Julie Han, professor of media and publishing at Seoul University. "Koreans have constant access to high-speed internet, and if you go into the subway, for example, you will see people are often on their phones sending messages, playing games, or watching videos. Reading is not their first choice." The problem has become so pervasive that some bookstores put out signs that read, "Turn on a book, turn off your phone."

Booksellers across South Korea have

suffered slowing sales for nearly a decade, and the fear is that smaller stores will begin to close. Like the U.S., South Korea saw a boom in bookstore chains in the 1980s. In addition to Kyobo, Aladdin, Bandi/Lunis, Yes24, and YP Books have multiple locations across the country. Though fixed book price laws have helped bricks-and-mortar stores compete against online retailers and keep revenue somewhat stable, booksellers complain that there are numerous loopholes that enable rampant discounting. Meanwhile, online shopping has become increasingly popular, and bookstores are investing heavily in technology to hold on to customers. And Aladdin and Yes24 have expanded into sales of used books.

To help shore up booksellers' morale, the South Korean government began sponsoring a national bookstore day last year; it was held for the second time on November 9. "The idea is to help cheer up booksellers and remind them how important they are to the country," said Deachoon Park, chairman of the Korea Federation of Bookstore Association (KFBA). This year's event included an academic conference on the future of bookselling, as well as an award ceremony and lunch, at which more than a dozen booksellers were honored for their contributions to culture and bestowed with the title "proud bookseller." Writers were also honored, with Eun-Young Choi, author of the bestselling story collection *Shoko's Smile*, named author of the year.

As part of the celebration, KFBA's Park read a multipart declaration outlining the priorities of the organization for the coming year. The top goal, Park said, is to convince politicians to amend

Kyobo Book Center in Seoul, the flagship of the Kyobo chain, is often bustling. But Kyobo's CEO says book sales in South Korea have been in steady decline.



the fixed book price law to close the discounting loopholes. Other priorities include working with publishers to establish a consistent

discount structure for bookstores that does not favor the chains; modernizing book distribution, which remains fractured and inefficient in many parts of the country; and assisting independent bookstores in their efforts to remodel their stores and make them more competitive.

Though the resolutions were met with enthusiastic applause, KFBA seems to be at a point similar to where the American Booksellers Association was a decade or more ago, when it was losing members. At the preconference academic seminar, in which *PW* participated, booksellers were looking to the Americans and Europeans on how to revive interest in book buying. Some of the concepts that garnered the best response were the ideas of introducing "buy local" campaigns and pushing bookstores into serving as community hubs.

Speculating on reunification

One opportunity for growth booksellers foresee is finding new book buyers in North Korea—should reconciliation

to Compete



PHOTO BY ED NAWOTKA

between the two nations ever happen. German publishing consultant Holger Eling spoke at the seminar and noted that one thing to keep in mind is that the North Koreans won't have much money. "What the Germans did was take truckloads of remainders from West Germany and sell them in the east once reunification happened," he said, referring to the reunification of Germany in 1990.

The possibility of reconciliation has also had a positive effect on the pub-

lishing industry, but in a way one might not anticipate: it has turned many publishers into real estate barons. In the early 2000s, the South Korean government established Paju Book City, a special economic enclave for publishers, as a way to shield them from Seoul's rising rents and establish a creative business cluster. Paju is 20 miles north of Seoul, close to the 38th parallel and the border with North Korea, and, at the time Paju Book City was established, there were few amenities. To entice publishers to move there, the government offered them cheap, long-term leases. Today, more than 150 publishing houses are based there, and some 10,000 people work in the district, which has also become popular with young families.

Now, with the potential for reconcili-

ation between the two Koreas, speculators and investors have driven up property prices in Paju, which will serve as the gateway city for trade should the border open. Though the overall complex is owned by the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, tenant publishers paying below-market rates are looking into subletting their unused space.

"The rents there are soaring," said one publisher who requested anonymity. "With the book business the way it is, a lot of publishers are joking that they would be better off being landlords than publishers. They are hoping for reunification not necessarily because they think they can sell more books but because they might be able to get rich off their real estate."

—Ed Nawotka

Call for Information

Feature: *Winter Institute Supplement*

Issue Date: Jan. 14 **Deadline:** Dec. 5

For a feature on Winter Institute 14, publishers are asked to send list of the authors they're bringing to the conference to Judith Rosen (jrosen@publishersweekly.com). For each author, include title, publisher, pub month, price, and why you're excited about the book (75 words max direct quote, attributed to a specific editor or publicist), the opening sentence, plus publicity and marketing plans, including size of first printing. For children's titles, please indicate the category (picture book, middle grade, or YA) and the age group.

CELEBRATING THE LEGACY OF STAN LEE 1922–2018

DEALS

By Rachel Deahl

MOVIE DEALS

- **Samira Ahmed's** *Internment* (Little, Brown, Mar. 2019) has been optioned by the Gotham Group and Chariot Entertainment. Kim Yau did the sale for Eric Smith at P.S. Literary. The agency said the near-future YA depicts a world where “Muslim Americans are forced into an internment camp, and a 17-year-old must fight against Islamophobia.” [PW]
- **Reed King's** SF novel *FKA USA* (Flatiron, June 2019) has been optioned by Warner Bros. for seven figures. Inkwell Management's Stephen Barbara, who sold the book in December 2016, pitched it as “*Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* for the American end of times.” [Deadline]

INTERNATIONAL DEALS

- **Marco Balzano's** *Resto qui* (*I'm Staying Here*), published in Italy in 2018, sold at auction to Neil Belton at Head of Zeus in the U.K. Piergiorgio Nicolazzini, who has an eponymous shingle, handled the sale. The agency said the novel follows the people of the village of Curon, who “fought for years against war and devastation to ensure their beloved land was not torn apart.” [PW]
- **James Meek's** nonfiction work about Brexit, *Dreams of Leaving and Remaining*, has been acquired by Leo Hollis at Verso Books in the U.K. The publisher, which took world English rights to the title, called it a “masterly portrait of an anxious nation”; it plans to publish in March 2019. [The Bookseller]

DEAL OF THE WEEK

■ Simone's 'Child' Finds a Home at Hachette

Lisa Simone, daughter of jazz singer Nina Simone, sold world rights to her memoir, tentatively titled *Child in Me*, to **Krishan Trotman** at Hachette Books.



© PHILIP DUCAP, FINEART PHOTOGRAPHY

Simone

Simone, a performer in her own right—she has released a number of CDs and appeared on Broadway in hits such as *Rent* and *Aida*—chronicles her tumultuous childhood and relationship with her mother, as well as the path she forged to build her own career. **Jason Anthony** at Massie & McQuilkin, who represented Simone, said the book will chronicle how she “did not experience the privilege and open doors one might expect” and how she “carved her own path... after tumultuous teen years of nomadic existence.” Simone is writing the book with journalist **Samantha Marshall**.

■ Disney Channel Star to Crown

Skai Jackson, star of such Disney Channel shows as *Bunk'd* and *Jessie*, sold *Reach for the Skai* to Crown for six figures at auction. The middle grade book, subtitled *How to Inspire, Empower and Clapback*, will, Crown said, explore the author's “lessons on life and rise to stardom, as well as the negative experiences that sometimes come with living in the spotlight.” **Samantha Gentry** took world rights to the book, slated for fall 2019, from **Alyssa Reuben** at the Paradigm Talent Agency. Jackson, known as an activist as well as an actress, was nominated for an NAACP Image Award in 2016.



© ANTON MAXWELL

Jackson

■ Dutton Checks Beckman's 'Math'

In a North American rights acquisition, **Stephen Morrow** at Dutton bought **Milo Beckman's** *Math Without Numbers*. The author is a journalist for *FiveThirtyEight* and, per Dutton, was named one of Harvard's “Fifteen Most Interesting Seniors” in 2015. Also a crossword puzzle maker for the *New York Times*, Beckman will offer a “conversational guide to the very highest levels of abstract mathematics.” **Jay Mandel** at William Morris Endeavor sold the title, which is set for fall 2020.



© MILO BECKMAN

Beckman

■ Wasserman Gets 'Paid' at Gallery

Claire Wasserman, founder of the organization Ladies Get Paid, sold a same-titled book to **Karyn Marcus** at Gallery. The personal finance title will, the Simon & Schuster imprint explained, be “an empowering guide that provides women real tools and insight to strategically navigate the workplace, achieve career success, and become leaders at their



Wasserman

organizations.” Marcus preempted North American rights to the book, set for spring 2020, from **Alexandra Machinist** at ICM Partners. The Ladies Get Paid group has, Gallery said, roughly 30,000 members.



Alexander

■ Alexander “Volunteers” for Algonquin

In a world rights acquisition, **Betsy Gleick** at Algonquin bought **Jerad W. Alexander’s** memoir *Volunteers* at auction. Alexander is a former U.S. Marine and current NYU graduate student in the school’s literary reportage program. (He’s set to finish the program in 2020.) The book, subtitled *A Memoir of War, Manhood, and America*, is, Gleick said, a “sharply observed coming-of-age narrative about growing up on military bases in the U.S. and abroad” and how “the soldier is taken as the enduring ideal of American masculinity.” Alexander was represented by **Elias Altman** at Massie & McQuilkin.



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Wiggs

■ Wiggs Gets Seven Figures at Morrow

Susan Wiggs inked a new three-book, seven-figure, world rights deal with her current publisher, William Morrow. **Rachel Kahan** brokered the agreement with **Meg Ruley** and **Annelise Robey** at the Jane Rotrosen Agency. Wiggs, a major bestseller, has written more than 60 titles and is published in 30 countries. She also recently closed a TV development deal for her Lakeshore Chronicles series, with production company the Cartel; this was handled by **Lucy Stille** at APA.



© SARA MAC KEY

Birnbaum

■ HC Nabs Birnbaum’s ‘Dr. B.’

Terry Karten at HarperCollins took U.S. rights to **Daniel Birnbaum’s** *Dr. B.* The debut Dutch historical novel, which **Elisabet Brännström** at Bonnier Rights sold, grew out of a discovery the author made in his attic: that of a box of letters written by his grandfather. Bonnier explained that the letters became the basis for the book, which is “a larger-than-life true story of a hitherto unknown WWII drama, played out in the world of book publishing and featuring emigres, spies and diplomats in 1940s Stockholm.” (Elaborating on the publishing element of the story, Bonnier said that the author’s grandfather, Immanuel Birnbaum, “worked at exile publishing house Behrmeann-Fischer in Sweden during the Second World War.”) The book, Bonnier added, has drawn comparisons to Lara Prescott’s forthcoming *We Were Never Here* (which Knopf bought for seven figures in June). It has also sold to publishers in, among other countries, Germany, Italy, and the U.K.

BEHIND THE DEAL

After a flurry of seven-figure-deal action at Amazon Publishing’s Thomas & Mercer unit—it recently re-upped authors Barry Eisler and T.R.



© DOUGLAS SONDERS

Bybee

Ragan to multi-title deals for seven figures each—Montlake Romance is getting in on the

action. Amazon Publishing’s romance imprint has just closed three seven-figure agreements with some of its biggest authors.

Catherine Bybee, **Melinda Leigh**, and **Kendra Elliot** have all inked new world rights, multi-title deals with the publisher. Bybee, with Montlake since 2012, signed with senior



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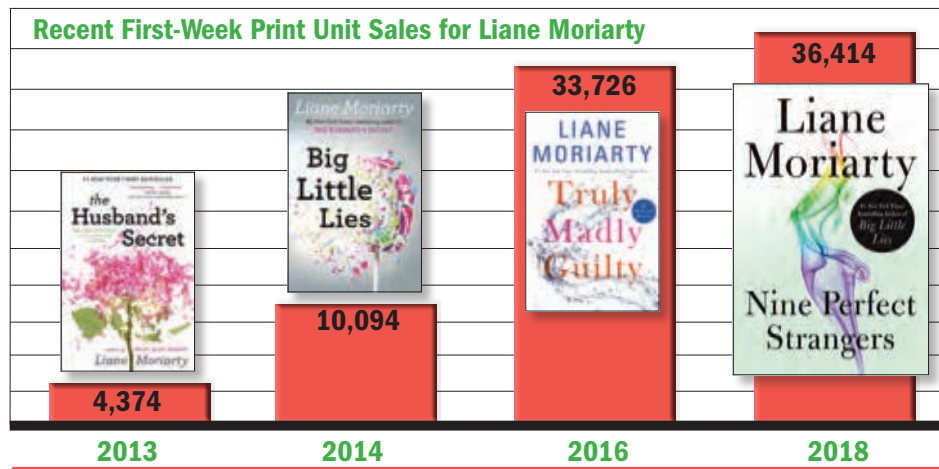
Elliot

editor Maria Gomez to pen five books that will launch a new series. Jane Dystel at

Dystel, Goderich & Bourret handled the world rights deal. Editorial director Anh Schluep bought four titles by Leigh that will be part of a new suspense series; Leigh was represented by Jill Marsal at Marsal & Lyon. Schluep also closed the Elliot deal, contracting her to write four romantic suspense titles set to launch a new suspense series; Elliot was represented by Meg Ruley at the Jane Rotrosen Agency.

By CAROLYN JURIS

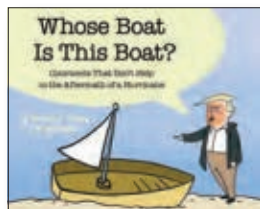
No Stranger to the List



Liane Moriarty's latest, *Nine Perfect Strangers*, is the #7 book in the country. Her popularity predates the success of her best-known novel, *Big Little Lies*, which Nicole Kidman and Reese Witherspoon acquired screen rights to just after its publication. 2013's *The Husband's Secret*, for instance, sold 189K print copies before *Lies* was released. Anticipation for her new books has been building, as first-week print unit sales show.

The Best Words

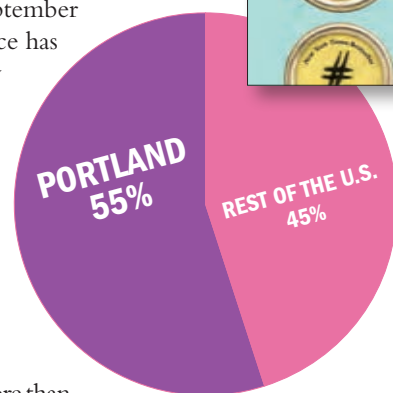
The #1 book in the country is **Whose Boat Is This Boat?**, a parody picture book by the staff of *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*. It's "comprised solely of comments spoken by President Donald J. Trump in the wake of Hurricane Florence on September 19, 2018, in New Bern, North Carolina," according to the flap copy; *The Late Show* is donating 100% of its proceeds to charity. It's been a good year for children's book parodies from late night talk shows: *A Day in the Life of Marlon Bundo*, a *Last*



Week Tonight with John Oliver production whose proceeds also went to charity, is the 11th bestselling book of the year to date.

Typecasting

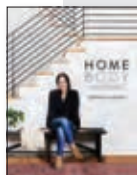
The paperback edition of Tom Hanks's 2017 short fiction collection, **Uncommon Type**, pubbed in September and in the weeks since has appeared sporadically on our trade paper list. It got a big boost this week from the author's appearance at Oregon's Portland Book Festival; it returns to our list at #12, with the Portland area accounting for more than half of the week's print unit sales.



NEW & NOTABLE

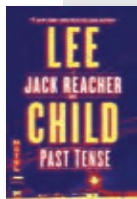
HOMEBODY

Joanna Gaines
#2 Hardcover Nonfiction, #3 overall
Just six months after the publication of *Magnolia Table*, the bestselling book of the year to date, Gaines releases her second title of 2018, an interior decorating guide.



PAST TENSE

Lee Child
#1 Hardcover Fiction, #4 overall
"Child's spare prose continues to set a very high bar," our starred review said of the 23rd Jack Reacher novel, which sees the ex-military policeman visiting his late father's rural New Hampshire birthplace, a setup that lets fans discover "more of this enduring character's roots."



TOP 10 OVERALL

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	UNITS
1	Whose Boat Is This Boat?	The Late Show	Simon & Schuster	209,032
2	The Meltdown (Diary of a Wimpy Kid #13)	Jeff Kinney	Amulet	149,928
3	Homebody	Joanna Gaines	Harper Design	93,828
4	Past Tense	Lee Child	Delacorte	69,825
5	The Reckoning	John Grisham	Doubleday	50,398
6	The Wonky Donkey	Smith/Cowley	Scholastic	49,267
7	Nine Perfect Strangers	Liane Moriarty	Flatiron	36,414
8	Girl, Wash Your Face	Rachel Hollis	Nelson	33,919
9	Every Breath	Nicholas Sparks	Grand Central	27,754
10	Dark Sacred Night	Michael Connelly	Little, Brown	25,828

ALL PRINT UNIT SALES PER NPD BOOKSCAN EXCEPT WHERE NOTED



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Hardcover Frontlist Fiction

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	–	Past Tense	Lee Child	Delacorte	9780399593512	69,825
2	1	The Reckoning	John Grisham	Doubleday	9780385544153	50,398
3	–	Nine Perfect Strangers	Liane Moriarty	Flatiron	9781250069825	36,414
4	4	Every Breath	Nicholas Sparks	Grand Central	9781538728529	27,754
5	3	Dark Sacred Night	Michael Connelly	Little, Brown	9780316484800	25,828
6	2	Elevation	Stephen King	Scribner	9781982102319	21,734
7	5	The Next Person You Meet in Heaven	Mitch Albom	Harper	9780062294449	14,863
8	–	The Noel Stranger	Richard Paul Evans	Simon & Schuster	9781501172052	12,800
9	–	You Don't Own Me	Clark/Burke	Simon & Schuster	9781501171666	12,758
10	–	Sea of Greed	Cussler/Brown	Putnam	9780735219021	12,728
11	7	Unsheltered	Barbara Kingsolver	Harper	9780062684561	8,872
12	6	Ambush	Patterson/Born	Little, Brown	9780316273985	8,673
13	–	The Colors of All the Cattle	Alexander McCall Smith	Pantheon	9781524747800	8,060
14	–	Heads You Win	Jeffrey Archer	St. Martin's	9781250172501	7,144
15	11	Where the Crawdads Sing	Delia Owens	Putnam	9780735219090	6,677
16	8	Holy Ghost	John Sandford	Putnam	9780735217324	6,651
17	9	A Spark of Light	Jodi Picoult	Ballantine	9780345544988	6,328
18	10	Alaskan Holiday	Debbie Macomber	Ballantine	9780399181283	5,492
19	12	Vince Flynn: Red War	Kyle Mills	Atria	9781501190599	5,016
20	13	Winter in Paradise	Elin Hilderbrand	Little, Brown	9780316435512	4,259

Hardcover Frontlist Nonfiction

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	–	Whose Boat Is This Boat?	The Late Show	Simon & Schuster	9781982121082	209,032
2	–	Homebody	Joanna Gaines	Harper Design	9780062801975	93,828
3	2	Girl, Wash Your Face	Rachel Hollis	Nelson	9781400201655	33,919
4	3	Cook Like a Pro	Ina Garten	Clarkson Potter	9780804187046	22,101
5	5	Killing the SS	O'Reilly/Dugard	Holt	9781250165541	20,484
6	10	Magnolia Table	Joanna Gaines	Morrow	9780062820150	13,517
7	7	Ship of Fools	Tucker Carlson	Free Press	9781501183669	13,090
8	8	Dare to Lead	Brené Brown	Random House	9780399592522	12,516
9	1	Medical Medium Liver Rescue	Anthony William	Hay House	9781401954406	12,493
10	4	Beastie Boys Book	Diamond/Horovitz	Random/Spiegel & Grau	9780812995541	10,870
11	6	Hindsight	Justin Timberlake	Harper Design	9780062448309	9,979
12	35	Guinness World Records 2019	–	Guinness World Records	9781912286430	8,675
13	12	Fear	Bob Woodward	Simon & Schuster	9781501175510	7,842
14	22	Leadership	Doris Kearns Goodwin	Simon & Schuster	9781476795928	7,204
15	15	Whiskey in a Teacup	Reese Witherspoon	Touchstone	9781501166273	7,082
16	13	Gmorning, Gnight!	Miranda/Sun	Random House	9781984854278	6,916
17	19	Educated	Tara Westover	Random House	9780399590504	6,760
18	17	Brief Answers to the Big Questions	Stephen Hawking	Bantam	9781984819192	6,336
19	33	12 Rules for Life	Jordan B. Peterson	Random House Canada	9780345816023	5,996
20	9	The Mamba Mentality	Kobe Bryant	MCD	9780374201234	5,956

LW: rank last week

Mass Market Frontlist

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	–	Leopard's Run	Christine Feehan	Berkley	9780451490162	14,209
2	1	Wyoming Legend	Diana Palmer	HQN	9781335041081	10,792
3	5	Instinct	Patterson/Roughan	Vision	9781478945192	10,080
4	6	First Snow	Nora Roberts	Silhouette	9781335014955	9,836
5	4	Typhoon Fury	Cussler/Morrison	Putnam	9780399575594	8,871
6	8	Every Breath You Take	Mary Higgins Clark	Pocket	9781501171734	8,088
7	9	A Season to Celebrate	Fern Michaels	Zebra	9781420135749	7,521
8	3	A High Sierra Christmas	William W. Johnstone	Pinnacle	9780786042135	7,401
9	2	The Gift of Christmas	Debbie Macomber	Mira	9780778308645	7,269
10	–	Tom Clancy: Power and Empire	Marc Cameron	Berkley	9780735215917	5,730
11	11	Behind the Iron	William W. Johnstone	Pinnacle	9780786042111	5,549
12	12	Merry and Bright	Debbie Macomber	Ballantine	9780399181245	5,399
13	7	Fall from Grace	Danielle Steel	Dell	9781101884027	5,260
14	32	In a Dark, Dark Wood	Ruth Ware	Pocket	9781501190476	4,961
15	10	Hardcore Twenty-Four	Janet Evanovich	Putnam	9780399179211	4,915
16	14	All I Want for Christmas	Robyn Carr	Mira	9780778308638	4,846
17	13	Look for Me	Lisa Gardner	Dutton	9781524742072	4,728
18	15	Two Kinds of Truth	Michael Connelly	Grand Central	9781455524167	4,675
19	17	The People vs. Alex Cross	James Patterson	Grand Central	9781538760642	4,535
20	27	A Stone Creek Christmas	Linda Lael Miller	Harlequin	9781335150721	4,531

Trade Paperback Frontlist

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	1	The Tattooist of Auschwitz	Heather Morris	Harper	9780062797155	13,724
2	–	The 17th Suspect	Patterson/Paetro	Grand Central	9781538760888	9,674
3	–	The Complete Diabetes Cookbook	–	America's Test Kitchen	9781945256585	9,548
4	2	Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine	Gail Honeyman	Penguin	9780735220690	8,217
5	4	The Wife Between Us	Hendricks/Pekkanen	Griffin	9781250130945	7,630
6	3	Andrew Jackson and the Miracle of New Orleans	Kilmeade/Yaeger	Sentinel	9780735213241	6,021
7	6	Less	Andrew Sean Greer	Back Bay	9780316316132	5,296
8	9	The Girl in the Spider's Web (movie tie-in)	David Lagercrantz	Black Lizard	9780525564560	5,284
9	8	Sapiens	Yuval Noah Harari	Harper Perennial	9780062316110	5,242
10	5	Sold on a Monday	Kristina McMorris	Sourcebooks Landmark	9781492663997	4,246
11	–	Then She Was Gone	Lisa Jewell	Atria	9781501154652	4,226
12	61	Uncommon Type	Tom Hanks	Vintage	9781101911945	4,190
13	13	Winter Solstice	Elin Hilderbrand	Back Bay	9780316435468	4,085
14	11	The Fallen	David Baldacci	Grand Central	9781538761380	3,745
15	10	Still Me	Jojo Moyes	Penguin	9780399562464	3,705
16	7	Year One	Nora Roberts	Griffin	9781250122964	3,683
17	14	Pachinko	Min Jin Lee	Grand Central	9781455563920	3,341
18	16	Rich People Problems	Kevin Kwan	Anchor	9780525432371	3,326
19	19	Beautiful Boy (movie tie-in)	David Sheff	HMH/Dolan	9781328974716	3,174
20	37	The Odd 1s Out	James Rallison	TarcherPerigee	9780143131809	2,909

LW: rank last week

Children's Frontlist Fiction

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	The Meltdown (Diary of a Wimpy Kid #13)	Jeff Kinney	Amulet	9781419727436	149,928
2	Lord of the Fleas (Dog Man #5)	Dav Pilkey	Graphix	9780545935173	22,173
3	Tales from a Not-So-Happy Birthday (Dork Diaries #13)	Rachel Renée Russell	Aladdin	9781534426382	12,618
4	Flashback (Keeper of the Lost Cities #7)	Shannon Messenger	Aladdin	9781481497435	12,151
5	Skyward	Brandon Sanderson	Delacorte	9780399555770	8,013
6	Archenemies (Renegades)	Marissa Meyer	Feiwel and Friends	9781250078308	6,822
7	The Getaway (Diary of a Wimpy Kid #12)	Jeff Kinney	Amulet	9781419725456	6,699
8	Dog Man and Cat Kid (Dog Man #4)	Dav Pilkey	Graphix	9780545935180	6,650
9	Dear Evan Hansen	Val Emmich et al.	Poppy	9780316420235	6,295
10	The Raging Storm (Warriors: A Vision of Shadows #6)	Erin Hunter	HarperCollins	9780062386571	5,785
11	The Hate U Give (movie tie-in)	Angie Thomas	HC/Balzer + Bray	9780062871350	4,801
12	A Map of Days (Miss Peregrine's Peculiar Children #4)	Ransom Riggs	Dutton	9780735232143	4,602
13	Kristy's Big Day (Baby-Sitters Club #6)	Martin/Galligan	Graphix	9781338067613	4,389
14	Kingdom of Ash (Throne of Glass)	Sarah J. Maas	Bloomsbury	9781619636101	4,031
15	To All the Boys I've Loved Before (movie tie-in)	Jenny Han	Simon & Schuster	9781534438378	3,973
16	Max Einstein: The Genius Experiment	Patterson/Grabenstein	LB/Patterson	9780316523967	3,740
17	Supernova (Amulet #8)	Kazu Kibuishi	Graphix	9780545828604	3,350
18	Always and Forever, Lara Jean	Jenny Han	Simon & Schuster	9781481430494	2,907
19	Crush	Svetlana Chmakova	Yen	9780316363242	2,820
20	Bridge of Clay	Markus Zusak	Knopf	9781984830159	2,758
21	The Hate U Give (collector's ed.)	Angie Thomas	HC/Balzer + Bray	9780062872340	2,729
22	Wrath of the Dragon King	Brandon Mull	Shadow Mountain	9781629724867	2,705
23	Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them	Rowling/Gill	Scholastic/Levine	9781338216790	2,692
24	Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone	Rowling/Selznick	Scholastic/Levine	9781338299144	2,675
25	I Survived the Attack of the Grizzlies, 1967	Lauren Tarshis	Scholastic	9780545919821	2,566

Children's Picture Books

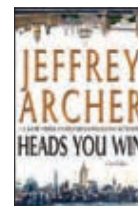
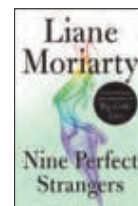
RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	The Wonky Donkey	Smith/Cowley	Scholastic	9780545261241	49,267
2	Construction Site on Christmas Night	Rinker/Ford	Chronicle	9781452139111	9,878
3	First 100 Words	Roger Priddy	Priddy	9780312510787	9,486
4	How the Grinch Stole Christmas!	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780394800790	8,697
5	Turkey Trouble	Silvano/Harper	Two Lions	9780761455295	8,654
6	The Berenstain Bears and the Joy of Giving	Berenstain/Berenstain	Zonderkidz	9780310712558	8,031
7	Goodnight Moon	Brown/Hurd	HarperFestival	9780694003617	7,857
8	Little Blue Truck's Christmas	Schertle/McElmurry	HMH	9780544320413	7,846
9	The Very Hungry Caterpillar	Eric Carle	Philomel	9780399226908	7,696
10	Giraffes Can't Dance	Andreae/Parker-Rees	Cartwheel	9780545392556	6,943
11	Dr. Seuss's ABC	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780679882817	6,498
12	Pete the Cat's 12 Groovy Days of Christmas	Dean/Dean	HarperCollins	9780062675279	6,260
13	Pete the Cat: The First Thanksgiving	Dean/Dean	HarperFestival	9780062198693	6,222
14	Love You Forever	Robert Munsch	Firefly	9780920668375	6,197
15	The Wonderful Things You Will Be	Emily Winfield Martin	Random House	9780385376716	5,988
16	The Pout-Pout Fish	Diesen/Hanna	FSG	9780374360979	5,866
17	Chicka Chicka Boom Boom	Martin/Archambault	Little Simon	9781442450707	5,588
18	Little Blue Truck	Schertle/McElmurry	HMH	9780544568037	5,565
19	How the Grinch Stole Christmas!	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9781524714611	5,562
20	The Polar Express (anniv. ed.)	Chris Van Allsburg	HMH	9780544580145	5,340
21	I Am Max	Astrid Holm	Random House	9781524718015	5,279
22	Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? (anniv. ed.)	Martin/Carle	Holt	9780805047905	5,164
23	Room on the Broom	Donaldson/Scheffler	Puffin	9780142501122	5,098
24	How to Catch a Turkey	Wallace/Elkerton	Sourcebooks	9781492664352	5,029
25	Llama Llama Gives Thanks	Anna Dewdney	Viking	9781101997154	4,984



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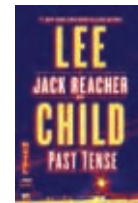
Fiction & Literature

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN
1	Nine Perfect Strangers	Liane Moriarty	Flatiron	9781250069849
2	Where the Crawdads Sing	Delia Owens	Putnam	9780735219113
3	Sea of Greed	Cussler/Brown	Putnam	9780735219038
4	Winter in Paradise	Elin Hilderbrand	Little, Brown	9780316435505
5	Heads You Win	Jeffrey Archer	St. Martin's	9781250172518
6	The Light We Lost	Jill Santopolo	Putnam	9780735212770
7	A Spark of Light	Jodi Picoult	Ballantine	9780345544995
8	Unsheltered	Barbara Kingsolver	Harper	9780062684745
9	Breakfast at Tiffany's	Truman Capote	Vintage	9780345803054
10	The Letter	Kathryn Hughes	Headline	9781783069170
11	Atonement	Ian McEwan	Anchor	9781400075553
12	Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine	Gail Honeyman	Penguin Books	9780735220706
13	The Joy Luck Club	Amy Tan	Penguin Books	9781101502730
14	China Rich Girlfriend	Kevin Kwan	Anchor	9780385539098
15	Rich People Problems	Kevin Kwan	Anchor	9780385542241
16	Lethal White	Robert Galbraith	Little, Brown	9780316422741
17	Black and Blue	Anna Quindlen	Delta	9780307767851
18	The Clockmaker's Daughter	Kate Morton	Atria	9781451649437
19	My Not So Perfect Life	Sophie Kinsella	Dial	9780812998276
20	The Aloha Reef Collection	Colleen Coble	Thomas Nelson	9780718031886



Mysteries & Thrillers

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN
1	Past Tense	Lee Child	Dell	9780399593529
2	The Reckoning	John Grisham	Doubleday	9780385544160
3	Dark Sacred Night	Michael Connelly	Little, Brown	9780316486675
4	The Woods	Harlan Coben	Dutton	9781101128671
5	Elevation	Stephen King	Scribner	9781982102333
6	You Don't Own Me	Clark/Burke	Simon & Schuster	9781501171673
7	The Other Woman	Sandie Jones	Minotaur	9781250192011
8	Vince Flynn: Red War	Kyle Mills	Atria/Bestler	9781501190612
9	Holy Ghost	John Sandford	Putnam	9780735217331
10	Up Shute Creek	Denise Grover Swank	DGS	9781939996688



Science Fiction & Fantasy

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN
1	Sandman Slim	Richard Kadrey	HarperCollins	9780061999444
2	Seveneres	Neal Stephenson	Morrow	9780062190413
3	The Forever War	Joe Haldeman	Open Road	9781497695450
4	Noumenon	Marina J. Lostetter	Harper Voyager	9780062497857
5	The Consuming Fire	John Scalzi	Tor	9780765388988
6	The Space Trilogy	C.S. Lewis	HarperOne	9780062340870
7	The Last Exodus	Paul Tassi	Talos	9781940456485
8	The Shadow Sorceress, Books 1–3	Bilinda Sheehan	B.S. Press	9781386307334
9	The Fifth Season	N.K. Jemisin	Orbit	9780316229302
10	The Valley of Shadows	Ringo/Massa	Baen	9781625796707



New Thrillers Crown European Charts

New thrillers from well-known authors topped the bestseller lists across Europe in late October. These included *The Lords of Time*, the final volume of Eva García Sáenz de Urturi's White City trilogy, which was #1 on the fiction list in Spain. *Sabotage*, the latest book from perennial favorite Arturo Pérez-Reverte was in the second spot. Sáenz de Urturi has been published in English by AmazonCrossing, and Pérez-Reverte is with Random House.

In France, Maxime Chattam's *The Signal*, a cross between Stephen King and H.P. Lovecraft, was the top fiction title. This is Chattam's 25th book and he has previously been translated by Gallic Books. The second slot was held by Laurent Gounelle, whose *I Promise*

You Freedom is the latest in a string of popular inspirational fiction titles; he is published in the U.S. by Hay House.

Sebastian Fitzek, said to be the bestselling German author of the past decade, returned to #1 on the German fiction list with *The Inmate*, about a father who has himself admitted to a mental hospital to find his child's murderer. Volker Kutsche, whose Babylon Berlin series is the basis of a popular Netflix adaptation, was at #3 with *Marlow*. Steven Hawking's *Brief Answers to the Big Questions* was #1 on Germany's nonfiction list. Yuval Noah Harari was at #3 with *21 Lessons for the 21st Century*; his *Sapiens* stayed atop the nonfiction list in Spain, where it has been for several months.

—Ed Nawotka

Germany



Fiction

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT
1	Der Insasse (<i>The Inmate</i>)	Sebastian Fitzek	Droemer
2	Mittagsstunde (<i>Midday Hour</i>)	Dörte Hansen	Penguin
3	Marlow (<i>Marlow</i>)	Volker Kutscher	Piper

Nonfiction

1	Kurze Antworten auf große Fragen (<i>Brief Answers to the Big Questions</i>)	Stephen Hawking	Klett-Cotta
2	Die bessere Hälfte (<i>The Better Half</i>)	Eckart von Hirschhausen and Tobias Esch	Rowohlt
3	21 Lektionen für das 21. Jahrhundert (<i>21 Lessons for the 21st Century</i>)	Yuval Noah Harari	C.H.Beck

For the week ended Nov. 4; used by arrangement with Buchreport

France



Fiction

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT
1	Le signal (<i>The Signal</i>)	Maxime Chattam	Albin Michel
2	Je te promets a liberté (<i>I Promise You Freedom</i>)	Laurent Gounelle	Calmann-Lévy
3	J'ai encore menti (<i>I Still Lied</i>)	Gilles Legardinier	Flammarion

Nonfiction

1	Idiss (<i>Idiss</i>)	Robert Badinter	Fayard
2	Ce que je peux enfin vous dire (<i>What I Can Finally Tell You</i>)	Ségolène Royal	Fayard
3	Fragile: souvenirs (<i>Fragile: Memories</i>)	Muriel Robin	XO

For the week ended Nov. 4; used by arrangement with GFK/Livres Hebdo

Spain



Fiction

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT
1	Los señores del tiempo (<i>The Lords of Time</i>)	Eva García Sáenz de Urturi	Planeta
2	Sabotaje (<i>Sabotage</i>)	Arturo Pérez-Reverte	Alfaguara
3	La muerte del comendador (<i>Killing Commendatore</i>)	Haruki Murakami	Tusquets

Nonfiction

1	Sapiens. De animales a dioses (<i>Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind</i>)	Yuval Noah Harari	Debate
2	El naufragio (<i>The Shipwreck</i>)	Lola García	Península
3	Nada es tan terrible (<i>Nothing Is So Terrible</i>)	Rafael Santandreu	Grijalbo

For the week ended Nov. 5; used by arrangement with El Cultural



Sari Feldman

Turning Readers into Writers

The Cuyahoga County Public Library's writer-in-residence program shows the library's increasingly critical role in our literary ecosystem

In the days leading up to his scheduled Sept. 16, 2001, visit to the Cleveland Public Library, acclaimed poet Robert Pinsky was stranded in Los Angeles after air travel was restricted following the attacks of 9/11. He was in L.A. taping lines for a guest appearance on *The Simpsons*, and though he was anxious to return to Boston to meet his new grandson, Pinsky honored his commitment to CPL. And on the first Sunday after 9/11, when churches, synagogues, and mosques around the country were struggling to come to grips with the tragedy and loss of life that had just occurred, the poetry selections Pinsky read for us at CPL transcended grief and offered our community a vision of hope and peace.

I will never forget that day, because I saw firsthand the power of poetry, and because I got to share it with my father. My dad had been visiting Cleveland on 9/11, and he too was stranded, unable to fly back to New York. As part of my job, I oversaw the Sunday programming for the library, and Dad was curious to see whether people would actually attend. He was surprised by the size of the crowd, and even more surprised at how moved he was by Pinsky's reading. The signed volume of poetry he purchased that day sat at his bedside until his death.

If my first meeting with Pinsky hadn't been so charged with emotion, I might never have recognized the gift the American people received when he was appointed the 39th poet laureate of the United States in 1997. His Favorite Poem Project inspired more than 18,000 Americans to share their favorite poems and set a new standard for the role of laureates, and writers-in-residence. A brilliant and powerful poet, he also excels as a curator and anthologist. People across the nation, like my father, discover and rediscover the pleasure and power of poetry because of Pinsky.

I recently asked Pinsky about his work as poet laureate. What is it about that position that Americans seemed to appreciate? "On the one hand, we Americans are suckers for anything that sounds British and high-class," he quipped. "Love them royals!"



L. to r.: Dave Lucas, David Giffels, Claire McMillan

We seem to get more thrill from the sound of 'laureate' than 'consultant in poetry to the Library of Congress,' which is actually the more democratic, nobler, and more American part of the title."

Certainly, the Library of Congress, which oversees the poet laureate position, is a unique institution—a treasure trove of national culture. But 46 states and the District of Columbia also have poet laureate positions, and poet laureates and writers-in-residence are also valued at the local level, including in my community. At my library, the Cuyahoga County Public Library (CCPL) in Ohio, nurturing these roles has long been a priority. And in recent years, my dream of creating a dedicated writing center in one of our branches came to fruition with the support of the William N. Skirball Foundation, the Cleveland Foundation, and Dominion Foundation. Led by librarian and writing program specialist Laurie Kincer, we've successfully built community collaborations and programs to activate the space and engage professional and aspiring writers. And among the best ideas for our William N. Skirball Writers' Center has been the writer-in-residence program.

Our inaugural writer in residence was David Lucas, currently

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“For libraries, it’s important to constantly breathe life into the otherwise static volumes sitting on our shelves by celebrating the creative experience.

poet laureate of the state of Ohio and part of the faculty at Case Western Reserve University. He is also a born teacher on a mission to help people appreciate the poetry in their lives. In his essay “Poetry for People Who Hate Poetry,” his opening gambit is, “I don’t want to convince you that you should love poetry. I want to convince you that you already do.” In Cleveland and across the state, Lucas’s goal has been to connect people who love language and words to a larger set of experiences. For example, he created Brews + Prose, a regular reading series hosted at a popular Cleveland bar since 2012, bringing a sense of fun to stereotypically stuffy events.

Following Lucas as CCPL writer in residence was Claire McMillan, author of *The Gilded Age*, and *The Necklace*. McMillan is a member of the board of trustees at the Mount, Edith Wharton’s home in Lenox, Mass., and has also been in residence as a writer there. But a library residency was a different experience for this solitary writer. “Being a writer in residence offered me an outlet to interact with the community and get out in the world,” she says. “Through teaching quarterly classes and holding monthly office hours, I got a chance to meet with and engage writers at many different places on their writing journeys.” McMillan is also a natural teacher, and the community of writers was better for her involvement in their work.

CCPL’s third writer in residence is David Giffels, who is best known for his books of personal narrative, *All the Way Home* and *Furnishing Eternity*. Giffels’s humor permeates his view of his writer-in-residence title. “It implies that I will be moving into the library, which is problematic, in part, because I snore,” he says. “For another, it suggests that the holder of the title is somehow elevated. After the announcement of my appointment, somebody tweeted in protest that this post should have been given to a less established writer, likening the gesture to swag bags being given to already-pampered celebrities at awards ceremonies.”

Giffels is another outstanding teacher. And he sees the post as an opportunity to share the grittier story of being a writer and navigating the publishing world to those in the writing community. He explains his focus for his time in residence as “a

platform to convey such realities of the writing life to readers and writers who can themselves benefit from that understanding.”

Although Giffels was joking about living in the library, CCPL did host playwright George Seremba in residence from 2011 to 2013, during which time he lived in a small house owned by the library. Seremba came to CCPL through a program that assists asylum-seeking writers. During his residency, he held community workshops and also taught at Case Western Reserve University’s Baker-Nord Center for the Humanities.

A Ugandan political refugee, Seremba was forced to leave his country in 1980 after an attempted assassination by Milton Obote’s military intelligence. He lived in Canada and Ireland before landing in the Cleveland area as an established playwright and actor. We were lucky to have him. And the Baker-Nord Center was an ideal partner. As the library’s writing programs were not fully formed in those years, we learned that leveraging the talent of strong local writing and theater communities created the best opportunities for broader engagement.

The writing programs at CCPL are evidence that libraries can sit comfortably in that place between creator and consumer, fostering both individual and community exploration of the literary arts. We can also demystify the writer and the writing life by bringing authors to our libraries and enabling aspiring writers to meet people who make their living through writing.

And it’s an increasingly vital contribution. For libraries, it’s important to constantly breathe life into the otherwise static volumes sitting on our shelves by celebrating the creative experience and actively supporting the people who create. The role of the library as a link between writer and reader is critical if we are to stem the decline of recreational reading in our nation. And really, who better than libraries? The great director Steven Spielberg said it best when he said, “Only a generation of readers will spawn a generation of writers.” ■

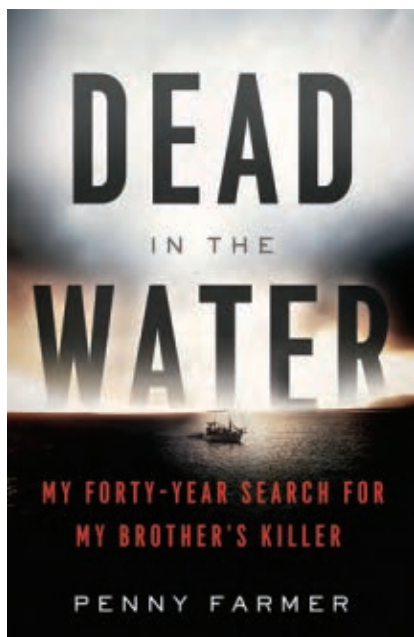
PW Libraries columnist Sari Feldman is executive director of the Cuyahoga County Public Library in Cleveland, Ohio, and a former president of the Public Library Association and of the American Library Association.

Your source for Christmas gifts
that warm the heart.

MORBID CURIOSITY

Violent crime and the people who commit it
continue to fascinate readers

BY CLARE SWANSON



There's no doubt that the true crime genre is booming: just look to the popularity of Netflix's *Making a Murderer* or the podcast *Serial*. In books, too, the category is on the rise: since the beginning of 2018, true crime titles sold 1.6 million print copies, per NPD BookScan; in the same period in 2016, titles in the category sold 976,000 print copies.

Kent State University Press has an entire line devoted to the genre, intended for scholarly and general readerships. The True Crime History series comprises 23 titles to date, and spring will see the releases of *The Belle of Bedford Avenue* by Virginia A. McConnell (Mar. 2019) and *Six Capsules* by George R. Dekle Sr. (May 2019). The former examines the 1902 murder of a young man, widely thought to have been at the hand of his teenage girlfriend; the latter delves into the life of Carlyle Harris, a handsome, charismatic medical student in the 19th century who poisoned Helen Potts, an upper class woman he coerced into a secret marriage.

"At its most basic, true crime appeals to people's desire for a vicarious thrill," says Kent State acquiring editor Will Underwood. "People have always been fascinated with stories of others who behaved badly and tried to get away with it."

In April, Diversion Books will publish *Dead in the Water*, in which journalist Penny Farmer investigates a murder that went unprosecuted for decades. Keith Wallman, editor-in-chief at Diversion Books, says that "true crime puts us right in the middle of good vs. evil, and gives us the thrill of doing detective work and bringing the bad guys to justice." When acquiring new projects in the genre, Wallman uses a rubric he calls the backyard test: can the book "powerfully convey"

ALL PRINT UNIT SALES PER NPD BOOKSCAN EXCEPT WHERE NOTED.

whether a crime could occur in the reader's comfort zone?

"I'm not talking only about geography, but also other kinds of spaces we all share," Wallman says. "Interests, work lives, family lives. That sense of place, community, or shared humanity allows a reader to empathize with the story's characters. That's the element the best true crime contains. Without it, the reader's just a bystander. With it, the reader's involved."

As true crime strengthens its hold on

the public imagination, we look at forthcoming books that help fans of the genre dive in further.

Pod People

For Ali Fisher, editor at Tor/Forge Books, good true crime illuminates how the "broken" parts of society affect real people. "Hearing the full story of a crime from a trusted voice is nothing like sterile news coverage or overwhelming statistics," she says. "It helps me process a world where violence is a

reality."

Fisher describes herself as a Murderino, the moniker for the many fans of Georgia Hardstark and Karen Kilgariff's two-year-old true crime podcast,



My Favorite Murder (see "Book 'Em."). On the show, the comedians recount crimes and near-crimes, often for live audiences during their sold-out tours.

Fisher contacted the pair about writing a book and helped them mold the proposal, which originally consisted of the duo's cheeky commentary, into a book that also incorporates narratives on mental health advocacy and victim advocacy, both of which are components of the podcast. The book, *Stay Sexy and Don't Get Murdered*—the title is taken from the pair's usual sign-off—pubs in May.

"There are a lot of us out there with a morbid curiosity and an interest in horrible things," Fisher says. "It's a relief to hear a frank conversation about murder, failure, and mental health spoken at full volume."

Other publishers, too, are enthusiastic about books by popular podcasters. "Interest in true crime is at an all-time high," says DK's Alastair Dougall, who edited *Unsolved Murders* (Feb. 2019) by Amber Hunt, host of the true crime podcast *Accused*, and Emily G. Thompson, founder of the *Morbidity* website.

The book spotlights crimes including the 1996 murder of JonBenét Ramsey, the Zodiac killings, and the Black Dahlia murder, in a highly visual style meant to draw the new wave of true crime fans, Dougall says. "We wanted to design something that would appeal to the many millennials who devour true crime podcasts on their commutes."

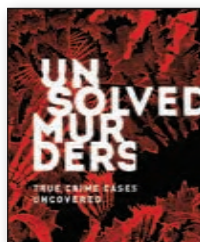
Book 'Em

Listen up: these popular podcasts are linked to forthcoming true crime titles

Accused

In the first season, journalists Amber Hunt and Amanda Rossman investigated the cold case of Elizabeth Andes, who was found murdered in her Oxford, Ohio, apartment in 1978. The second season focuses on the death of Retha Welch in 1987. Diversion published *Accused*, a transcript of season one, in 2018 and has signed up Hunt for another tie-in title, according to editor-in-chief Keith Wallman.

The book: *Unsolved Murders* (DK, Feb. 2019) by Hunt and Emily G. Thompson, founder of the *Morbidity* website.



Dirty John

Los Angeles Times reporter Christopher Goffard tracks a Southern California con man who torments and traumatizes a businesswoman, whom he met via a dating website, and her family. The podcast inspired a Bravo limited TV series starring Connie Britton and Eric Bana, which premieres at the end of November.

The book: *Dirty John and Other True Stories of Outlaws and Outsiders* (S&S, Nov.).

Forensic Transmissions

Mikita Brottman, a psychoanalyst and the author of several nonfiction titles, assembles public domain audio files such as 911 calls, trial clips, police interrogations, and forensic and victim testimony. Recent episodes have centered on Bernhard Goetz, known as the Subway Vigilante, and serial killer Ted Bundy.

The book: *An Unexplained Death* (Holt, Nov.), which focuses on a single case, the 2006 death of Rey O. Rivera in Baltimore.



My Favorite Murder

Comedians Karen Kilgariff and Georgia Hardstark banter about and recount murders and other violent crimes, with an underlying emphasis on vigilance and self-defense—evident in the oft-repeated mantra that's now the title of their forthcoming book.

The book: *Stay Sexy & Don't Get Murdered* (Forge, May 2019).

—C.S.

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Mysteries, Thrillers & True Crime

"The knee-jerk responses—that she was crazy, that she was evil—did not, for me, answer any sort of question as to why."

—NANCY ROMMELMANN,
author of *To The Bridge*

The Unthinkable

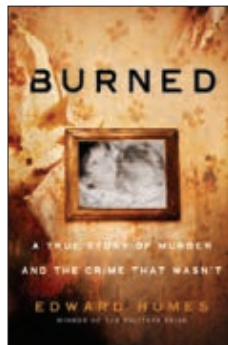
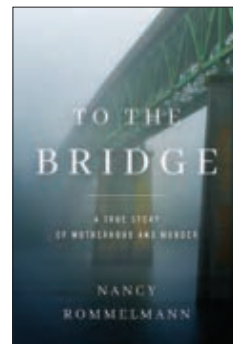
Of the myriad crimes humans commit, few evoke horror on par with that of the killing of a child, particularly when the accused is the child's mother. In May 2009, Amanda Stott-Smith, a middle-class mother of two living in Portland, Ore., drove to the Sellwood Bridge and dropped her two children into the Willamette River. Her seven-year-old daughter survived the fall, but her four-year-old son did not. Stott-Smith was arrested and is serving out her 35-year prison sentence.

Journalist Nancy Rommelmann watched the public outcry in the weeks following the boy's death and felt compelled to explore what leads someone to commit such an act, and the fear such a crime stokes in everyone else.

"The knee-jerk responses—that she was crazy, that she was evil—did not, for me, answer any sort of question as to why," Rommelmann says. "What these reactions did tell is how terrified we are by the idea of a mother killing her child, how we have to make her 'other' and slam the door. I was not afraid of looking into why. In fact, I had to."

Rommelmann compiled seven years of research and interviews into 2018's *To the Bridge*, which *PW*'s review praised for its "compassion and emotional honesty"; Little A will reissue the book in paperback in January, and Rommelmann has plans to speak at AWP 2019 in March.

When asked about the difficulty of researching and writing about crimes against children, Rommelmann said that a story so seemingly unfathomable needs to be told. "It's only impossible to comprehend if we decide we cannot look at it," she says. "There are, no doubt, nicer neighborhoods to hang out in than the one where mothers kill their children, but if we stand here for a moment, place the pieces on the ground and look at them, we can make





Kensington Brings U.K. Grip Lit to U.S. Readers

Britain's domestic and psychological suspense writers offer a dark, edgy take on this mesmerizing genre

The term *grip lit* refers to the new wave of gripping psychological thrillers that are taking the book world by storm. Readers have devoured books by both British and American authors—think of Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl* and Paula Hawkins's *The Girl on the Train*, and of up-and-coming authors such as Charlie Donlea. In 2019 Kensington is publishing new books by some of Britain's newest and best writers in this growing genre.

While grip lit tends to be written by female authors and to feature female protagonists, it isn't a "women's genre," says Vida Engstrand, Kensington's communications director. These books tend to appeal to "men, women, and everyone in between," Engstrand says. "It's a category that allows what are essentially thriller novels to defy genre fiction snobbery. People who normally wouldn't consider themselves thriller or crime fiction readers seem open to mixing grip lit and literary fiction on their shelves."

Fans can get a jump on 2019 with Kensington's December release of Fiona Cummins's *The Collector*, the sequel to her 2018 bestseller *Rattle*. It's a deep dive into the minds of a murderer and a detective who are equally ruthless. Kensington editorial director Alicia Condon hails the story for its "unforgettably creepy killer and his enigmatic teen protégé, who kept me guessing about his true intentions right up to the last page."

In February comes *The Temp*, the sophomore novel by Michelle Frances, a former BBC development exec who Condon says has unique insight into "the psyche of the privileged English professional woman and the underlying conflict between the haves and have nots." The novel probes the dark heart of workplace competition, where two

women will do whatever it takes—including committing murder—to get ahead.

Former police and military psychologist Emma Kavanagh brings her expertise to *I Am Watching*, about a serial killer whose reign of terror inexplicably continues after he's incarcerated. Kavanagh's capacity for deft misdirection will keep readers on their toes.

Many of Kensington's 2019 grip lit titles explore the dynamics in female relationships. Emma Rowley's *Where the Missing Go* (Apr.) introduces a mother who works at a helpline for missing teens, where she receives a call from her own daughter. Isabel Ashdown's *Beautiful Liars* (June) tells the story of a true crime TV show host who

must cover the decades-old disappearance of her best friend. Debbie Howells's *Her Sister's Lie* (June) excavates the tormented relationships within a family in the aftermath of a mother's death.

The wide appeal of grip lit owes much to its psychological depth. Unreliable narrators keep readers guessing about the truth, deep and realistic probing into histories and motives humanize killers, and carefully

crafted settings create an inescapable atmosphere. "Something I love about grip lit," Condon says, "is the way an author portrays the tension between what's happening on the surface and what's actually going on underneath."

Kensington editor-in-chief John Scognamiglio sees an intensity and intellectual challenge in the books of these U.K. grip lit authors that he doesn't always sense in works by their American contemporaries. "There's always an unexpected twist or turn to the story that you rarely find in American suspense thrillers," Scognamiglio says. "The stories are always darker and more dangerous."

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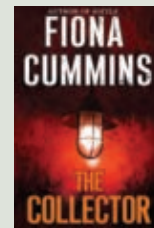


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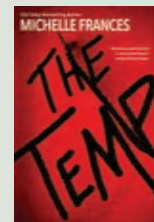
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Emma Rowley, Emma Kavanagh

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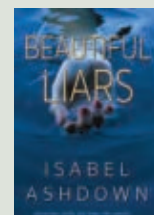
I Am Watching

Emma Kavanagh
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978-1-4967-1374-2
Mar.



Where the Missing Go

Emma Rowley
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Beautiful Liars

Isabel Ashdown
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For more information and more grip lit titles, visit kensingtonbooks.com or contact Lulu Martinez, senior communications manager, at lmartinez@kensingtonbooks.com.

Mysteries, Thrillers & True Crime

sense of it, we can put it together.”

Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter Edward Humes investigates another case of a mother convicted in the deaths of her children in *Burned* (Dutton, Jan. 2019; see “CSLie?” p. 83). In early 2017, while spending time observing the work at the California Innocence Project, Humes was drawn to the case of Jo Ann Parks, a woman imprisoned for life for killing her four-year-old son and her one- and two-year-old daughters by burning down their home in 1989. According to Humes, fire science has changed dramatically in the 30 years since, and in the book, he contends that there was no crime in the first place—the fire was accidental.

From a storytelling perspective, the author says, the case is rich with ambiguity and suspense. “This is not a DNA case, which generally leaves no room for doubt about guilt or innocence,” Humes says. “It offered all the elements to build

a compelling narrative and an important journalistic investigation”—complex characters, a “rush to judgement” by authorities, and Parks’s horror at losing her children and being branded a murderer.

“The possibility that someone could spend the rest of her life in prison for a crime that may never have occurred, and that the justice system might be incapable of correcting the errors that could permit such an atrocity, struck me as a story that had to be told,” Humes says.

Connecting the Dots

Sometimes an author’s personal link to a case makes its pursuit feel all the more necessary, regardless of how much time has passed since the crime was committed.

In July 1978, Penny Farmer’s 25-year-old brother, Chris, and his girlfriend, Peta, were discovered floating in the Caribbean off the coast of Guatemala. The pair, traveling together on a Central

American adventure, had been beaten and tortured. Despite one likely suspect, an American man named Silas Boston, no arrests were made, and the case went cold for decades.

Farmer, 17 at the time of the murders, grew up, had a family of her own, and became a freelance journalist. In October 2015, after what she describes as an epiphany, she sat down at her computer, opened up Facebook, and set out to track down Boston.

“By the end of the weekend, I had a pretty clear picture of Boston’s family,” says Farmer, who lives in the U.K. “I was amazed by how easy it was to glean information, which in turn made me cross with myself that I had not done it sooner. British and American law enforcement agencies and Interpol were sure that Boston was the perpetrator of the crime back in 1979; I was totally perplexed to discover he was a free man, living a seemingly normal life on the

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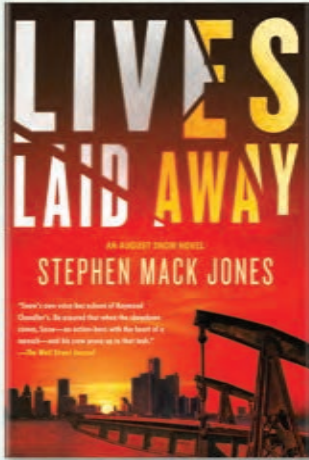


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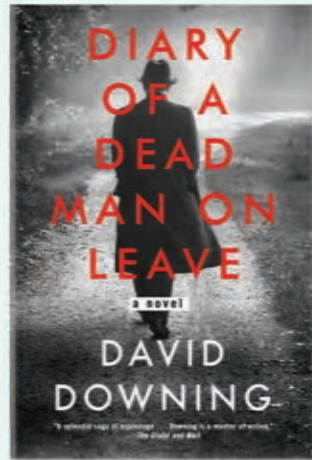
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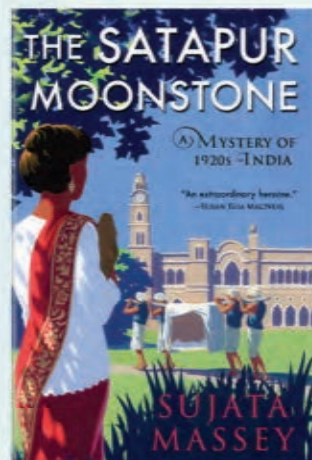


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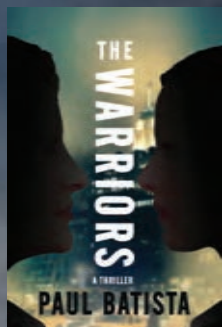
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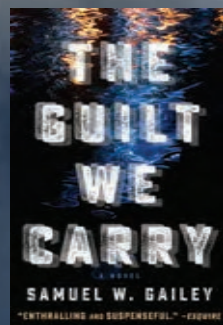
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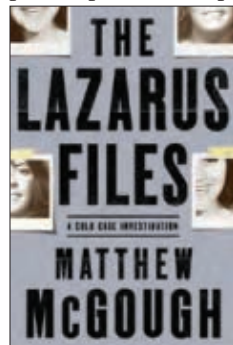
other side of the Atlantic."

Farmer details the crime and her quest to bring Boston to justice in *Dead in the Water* (Diversions, Apr. 2019). The book was, first and foremost, a way for Farmer to commemorate Chris and Peta's memory. But she also, as a journalist and a grieving sister, felt ownership over the story and how it would be told.

"It seemed natural to write what is, by anyone's standards, a most incredible true crime story that has had such a life-changing, devastating impact on my family," Farmer says. "This is my family's story to tell."

Cold cases, such as the long-unprosecuted killing that haunted Farmer's family, have proven especially alluring to true crime aficionados. One of the biggest true crime titles of 2018, *I'll Be Gone in the Dark* by Michelle McNamara, who died unexpectedly in 2016, has sold 164,000 print copies since it hit shelves in February. Published by Harper, the book documents McNamara's obsessive pursuit of a serial killer and rapist who terrorized California in the 1970s and '80s. In April 2018, two years after McNamara's death and two months after the book's publication, 72-year-old Joseph DeAngelo was arrested after police say DNA evidence linked him to the crimes.

"The idea of a murderer living freely in society is appalling," says Matthew McGough, author of *The Lazarus Files* (Holt, Apr. 2019), of the perennial allure of cold cases. "Every unsolved homicide is its own tragic story with no resolution. Readers, like detectives, want to try to put the pieces of the puzzle together and



help bring closure to victims' loved ones. True stories about the long-delayed delivery of justice are innately powerful."

In *The Lazarus Files*,

McGough probes the 1986 murder of 29-year-old newlywed Sherri Rasmussen. The case remained unsolved until 2009, when a swab from a bite mark on Rasmussen's arm was scrutinized with new DNA technology, leading to the arrest of Stephanie Lazarus, an LAPD detective and former girlfriend of Rasmussen's husband.

McGough had met Lazarus the year before her arrest, during an interview about international art theft—Lazarus's division at the LAPD. "Did the respected police detective I met with really commit murder and carry that secret her entire career?" McGough asked. "I was intensely curious and started digging into the story that very day."

The nine-year project threw McGough, author of the coming-of-age memoir *Bat Boy*, into the world of investigative journalism. "Through trial and error, I learned how to develop sources within the LAPD and beyond," he says. In his reporting, he talked with retired LAPD homicide detectives, crime lab analysts, prosecutors, and multiple friends and former colleagues of Detective Lazarus.

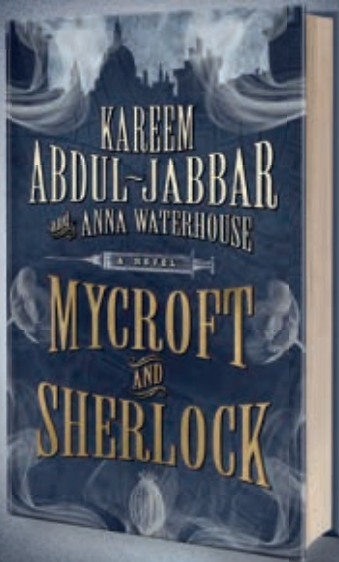
Like McGough, Mark Bowden also returned to a subject he had written about before. When he was a 23-year-old cub reporter at a small Maryland newspaper, he covered the disappearance of Katherine and Sheila Lyon, ages 10 and 12, from the parking lot of a suburban D.C. mall in 1975. Three years ago, he spotted a story in the *Washington Post* reporting that Montgomery County, Md., police had made a break in the case. "This was a particularly haunting story—one that I never stopped wondering about," Bowden says. "I immediately called and arranged to drive down from my home in Pennsylvania and talk to the detectives."

A cold case detective had reopened the case and noticed that a 1975 sketch of a suspicious man at the mall, Lloyd Welch, looked similar to a man who had reported seeing the sisters get into a car. The lead re-energized the case, and an investigation began in earnest—the inquiry, and what Bowden calls "remarkable" detec-

continued on pg. 32

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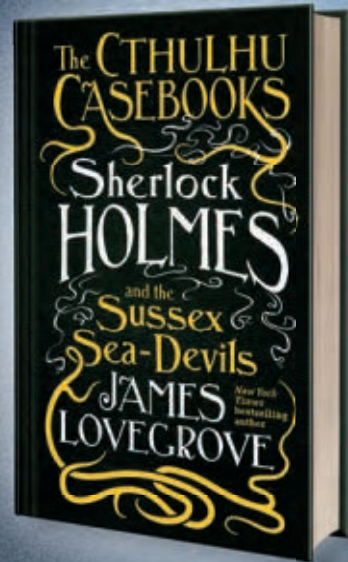


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Making Sense of the Past

PWTalks with Patrick Radden Keefe

In 1972, Jean McConville, a widowed mother of 10, was dragged from her home in Belfast, never to be seen alive again. Her disappearance is among the most notorious crimes of the violent, 30-year conflict in Northern Ireland known as the Troubles. Her body was recovered in 2003, but many questions remain, which *New Yorker* staff writer Patrick Radden Keefe seeks to answer in *Say Nothing* (Doubleday, Feb. 2019), his investigation into McConville's death and the history of the Troubles.

You wrote about Jean McConville's death, and the Troubles, for the *New Yorker*. What brought you to the story?

I first sparked to this story in 2013, when a woman named Dolours Price died and I read her obituary in the *Times*. She had lived an absurdly dramatic life: she came from a family

with a long history in the Irish Republican Army and in the early 1970s, when she was scarcely out of her teens, she joined the IRA. She led a bombing mission to London, was sentenced to 20 years in prison, went on hunger strike, defied Margaret Thatcher, got out of prison and married an Irish movie star, and eventually disclosed the sensitive details of her IRA career in a secret oral history project at Boston



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Mysteries, Thrillers & True Crime

College. Price had also played a role in one of the most notorious incidents of the Troubles: the disappearance of Jean McConville. As it happened, my boss, David Remnick, read the same obituary, and soon I was off and running on a big article about Dolours Price and the Jean McConville case.

What made you decide to expand into a book-length investigation?

I spent 10 months on the piece, but even as I was finishing it, I felt as though there was a deeper, more profound story to be told about the ways in which the lives of a handful of characters intersected over the course of the Troubles.

In a conflict marked by such violence and so many disappearances, why is this crime so haunting?

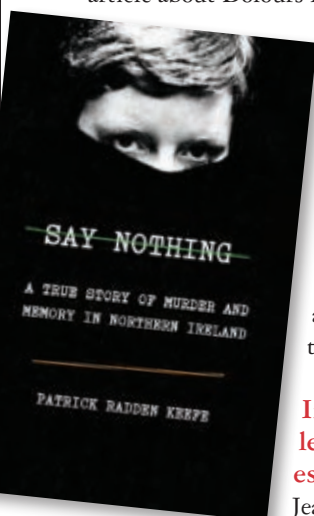
Jean McConville was a widow and a

mother of 10, so with one squeeze of the trigger, her killer orphaned 10 children. Even in the context of the Troubles, where so many lost their lives, this crime had assumed an iconic dimension.

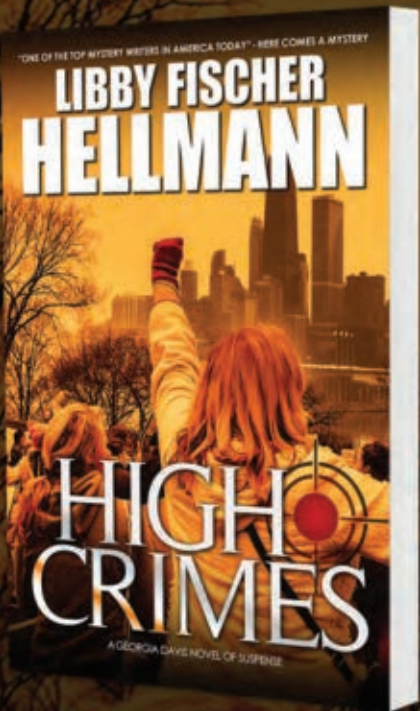
What did you hope to achieve in writing this book, and how did those goals evolve?

I wanted to weave together the stories of both the victims and the perpetrators on either side of a terrible murder, and to tie in a series of other questions, about the uses of espionage and intrigue during the Troubles, and the fraught issue of how to make sense of the past. *Say Nothing* starts in 2013, with a couple of Belfast homicide detectives traveling to Boston College to seize the oral history transcripts of Dolours Price. They were investigating the murder of Jean McConville. So this one death from 1972 continues to reverberate, in a very real way, in the present day. In fact, what I did not realize when I embarked on this project is that I would end up discovering the identity of the individual who actually pulled that trigger in 1972—and identifying that person, for the first time, in the book.

—C.S.



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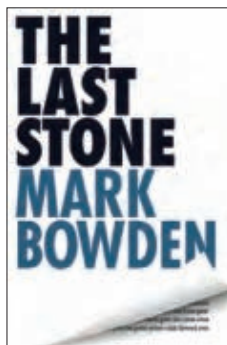
"I don't think there's anything ethically wrong with being interested in death."

—MIKITA BROTTMAN, psychoanalyst and author of *An Unexplained Death*

tive work, is the primary focus of *The Last Stone* (Atlantic Monthly, Apr. 2019).

Welch pleaded to two counts of first-degree felony murder in 2017. The girls' bodies were never recovered, and alleged coconspirators were either dead or for other reasons could not be prosecuted.

For Bowden, returning to the start of his career, and seeing some justice served, provided a sense of closure. "I wondered about what happened to those girls, and who took them, for my entire adult life," he says. "I now feel that I know, even if I don't have all the particulars. The big questions were answered, and that enabled me to understand to some extent why."



A Moral Quandary

In *An Unexplained Death* (Holt, Nov.), Mikita Brottman looks into the 2006 death of Rey O. Rivera, whose body was found in Brottman's Baltimore apartment complex. The death was ruled a suicide, but Brottman's investigation of the case leads her to wonder whether it was, in fact, a homicide. *PW*'s starred review called the book "a page-turning look at the darker impulses of the human psyche."

In addition to her examination of Rivera's case, Brottman, a psychoanalyst and author of several previous nonfiction titles, also turns the exploration inward, asking questions of her own fixation on death. "I don't think there's anything ethically wrong with being interested in death," she says. "We should be inter-

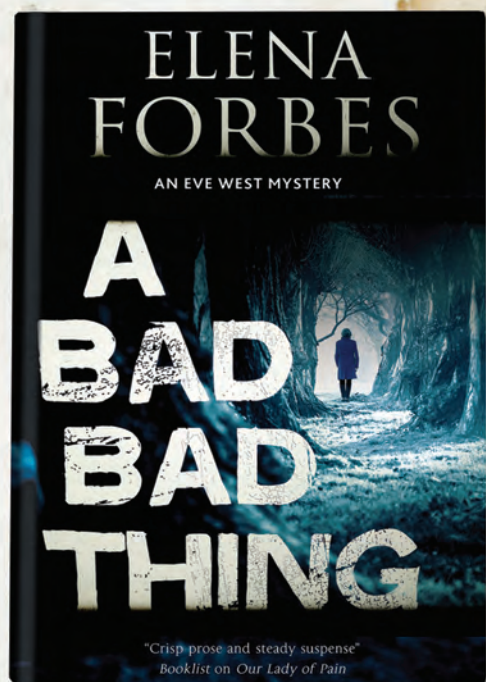
ested. We're all going to die, after all. In the past, people were a lot more comfortable with death, because they witnessed it more frequently. We feel uncomfortable today when someone thinks and talks about death 'too much.'"

As true crime has hit the pop culture mainstream, with it has come some debate about the ethical dilemmas of voyeurism, and using crime and violence as entertainment or art.

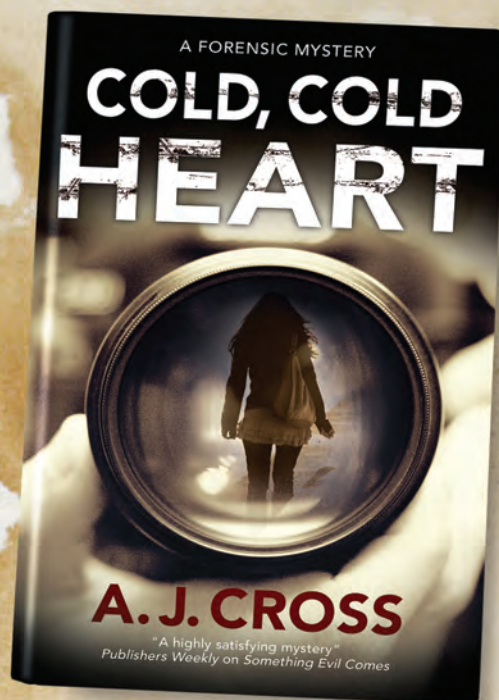
"I've struggled with it a little," says Serena Jones, senior editor at Henry Holt. "One time the ex-wife of a subject of one of my books called me to complain about my author contacting her. It's tough, but I usually borrow the line that journalists use, about the story being out there already so the best thing is for it to be told in the right way. And really, most of the time, victims' families want the facts out there, as long as it's done in a sensitive way. Telling these stories in book form can be a way of immortalizing someone, and that seems superethical."

Stephen Morrow, executive editor at Dutton and editor on Humes's *Burned*, says the question, "Why tell this tale?" is of utmost importance. "Is this story doing nothing more than satisfying some sort of bloodlust? Some appetite that we ought to be ashamed of?" he asks. "If you don't have an understanding of why a story is making a valuable contribution, then walk away."

To the Bridge author Rommelmann agrees, adding that true crime narratives can enhance an understanding of human nature. "The popularity of the genre, at its best, can do a real service," she says. "Instead of that knee-jerk crazy-or-evil, we enter the story, spend some time, and come to richer, more humane conclusions."



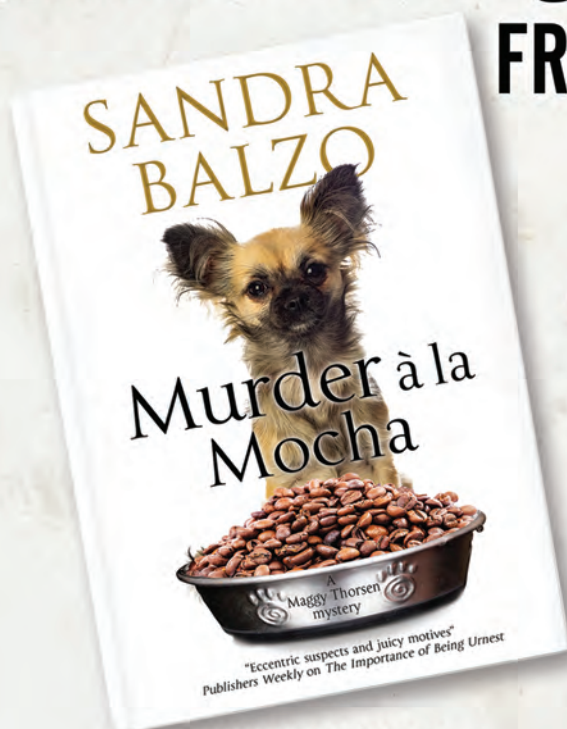
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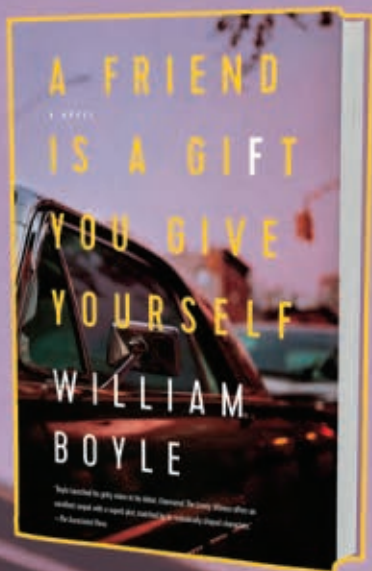
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Believe *the Women*

New thrillers take inspiration from issues raised by and relevant to the #MeToo movement

By GWENDA BOND

It's been a year since the *New York Times* published a story detailing allegations of assault and harassment by Harvey Weinstein—revelations that reinvigorated the cultural debate about whose stories are believed, what consequences perpetrators should face, and where society goes from here. As the world at large ponders questions of memory, consent, and power, fiction is proving fertile ground for exploring these issues.

Film rights for Alafair Burke's 2018 suspense novel *The Wife* (Harper), about a woman with trauma in her past who discovers her celebrity husband may be a predator, went to Amazon Studios for seven figures after a five-way bidding war, and Burke is currently at work on the script. She wrote her novel before the spread of the #MeToo movement; forthcoming titles continue the conversation.

All the Rage

A prime example is *Kiss the Girls and Make Them Cry* by Mary Higgins Clark (S&S, Apr. 2019), which revolves around a journalist doing research for a piece on #MeToo. A long-buried incident returns



to her mind when she learns that the man who assaulted her at a college fraternity party is now a powerful businessman who will do anything to hide the truth about his past.

In Rachel Cline's *The Question Authority* (Red Hen, Apr. 2019), a middle-aged woman reunites with a childhood friend and discovers that the friend had a relationship with their teacher in the eighth grade. As with Clark's book, Cline's raises questions of what justice might look like after so much time has passed.

The roots of *Good as Gone* author Amy Gentry's *Last Woman Standing* (HMH, Jan. 2019) predate the emergence of #MeToo by several years. In 2013, Gentry, then a freelancer for the *Austin Chronicle*, began covering women involved in the local stand-up scene and was invited into private online groups where the comedians shared their experiences with sexism and harassment.

Last Woman Standing, pitched as *Strangers on a Train* meets *Thelma and Louise*, begins when stand-up comic Dana Diaz meets computer programmer Amanda Dorn. After bonding over the toxic masculinity in their respective industries, they agree to get revenge on



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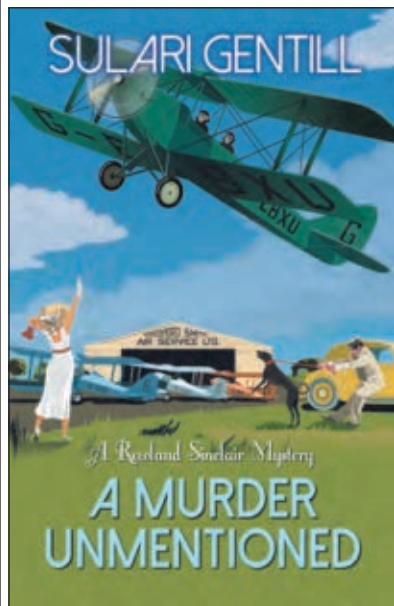


Death Opens a Window is the follow-up to Mikel J. Wilson's award-winning first novel in the series, *Murder on the Lake of Fire*.



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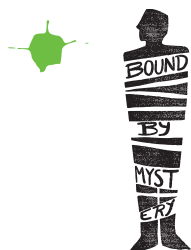
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Mysteries, Thrillers & True Crime

each other's assailants.

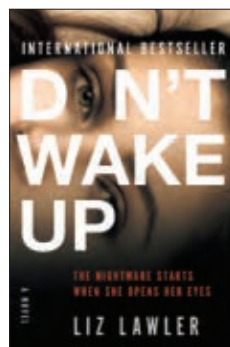
"I was trying to look at the bigger systemic reasons why women are traumatized over and over," Gentry says. "What drives women out of the tech industry? What drives them out of comedy?" She realized, as she began writing, that it's often easier for women to feel angry for and protective of other women than it is for them to be angry for themselves.

"What keeps women up at night is knowing these men are serial predators," Gentry says. "In reality, that's how and why these things come to light. Many victims don't think they will get revenge. It's on behalf of other women that people come forward."

Vigilantism also figures into S.A. Lelchuk's debut, *Save Me From Dangerous Men* (Flatiron, Mar. 2019), which launches his series about private investigator Nikki Griffin. Working out of an office located above a bookstore, the hardboiled PI punishes men who hurt women, humiliating them in order to keep their victims and other women safe in the future.

"I wanted to explore what is justified, and where does that become too much?" Lelchuk says. "It's vigilante work, but not with a bloodthirsty morality. She wants a proportional response."

Lelchuk's lead character believes and helps other women; by contrast, the main character in Liz Lawler's debut novel must fight for herself. In *Don't Wake Up* (Harper, Feb. 2019), Alex Taylor, an emergency physician, comes to on an operating table, with a man wearing a surgical mask standing over her. She then suffers a chilling assault that leaves no physical evidence. After reporting the crime she encounters skepticism everywhere, including from her boyfriend and the police. Alex begins to question her memory, until there's another victim.



Lawler, who worked as a nurse for two decades, says she finds the idea of not being believed terrifying, though she acknowledges that it is a very real issue. "Not everyone wants to hear the truth, because it's more comfortable to hear the lie," she says. "I hope, when women come forward, we hear their truths and say, 'We believe you.'"

Stories that unpack female anger and frustration aren't just cathartic for readers—they can be a way for authors to process their emotions, too. Libby Fischer Hellmann traces the origins of the fifth entry in her series about Chicago PI Georgia Davis to a specific source: "After the

2016 election, I went through a period of rage that lasted for a year."

In an effort to cope, Hellmann joined a Facebook group dedicated to discussing Russian collusion and interference and became friends with its founder. At the same time, she brainstormed one book, then another, and lost interest because they were too apolitical. She eventually found an idea that excited her: what if the female head of a large resistance group were murdered?

After gaining permission from her friend, to whom the book is dedicated, she wrote *High Crimes* (Red Herring, Nov.), in which the nonpolitical Davis must solve a highly politicized case. *PW's* review noted that "for readers who watch the nightly news with dismay, the novel offers a satisfying alternate reality."

Justice League

Authors with legal and law enforcement backgrounds are bringing their experiences to bear in novels that mine similar territory. Retired NYPD detective Ed Conlon—whose memoir, *Blue Blood*, was a National Book Critics Circle Award

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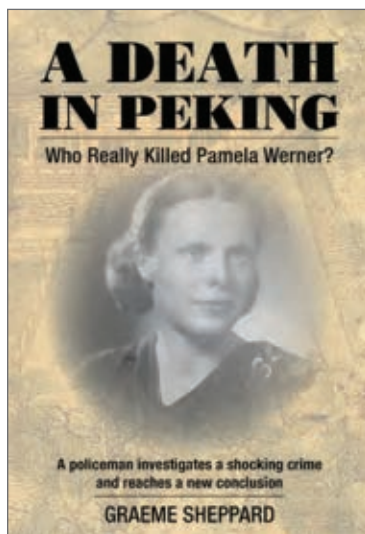
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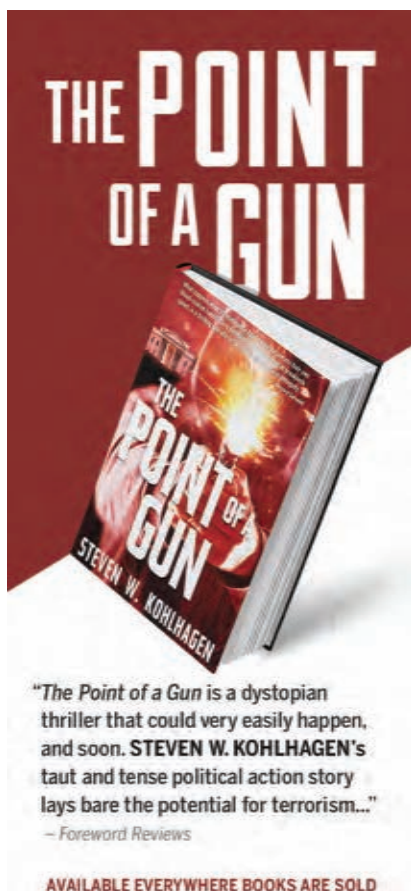
A Death in Peking

By Graeme Sheppard

The brutal murder of 19 year-old Pamela in 1937 Peking shocked the world, but her murderer was never found. The book *Midnight in Peking* declared the murderer an American dentist but years of research by police detective Graeme Sheppard uncovered new evidence to reveal a never before named suspect. So who did it? Who killed Pamela?

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Childhood's End

The seismic shift between childhood and adulthood underlies these forthcoming novels, which seek to answer questions tied to characters' pasts in order to illuminate their presents.

Call Me Evie

J.P. Pomare, Putnam, Mar. 2019

Pomare's psychological suspense debut is set in rural New Zealand, where the author, now living in Australia, grew up. At age 17, his unreliable but sympathetic narrator doesn't know whether she's a captive or a legitimate dependent of Jim, the man she lives with. He calls her Evie, but when her foggy memory begins to give her glimpses of a life she lived in Melbourne—in which she went by the name Kate—she sets out to find the truth.



The Current

Tim Johnston, Algonquin, Jan. 2019

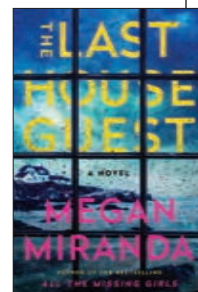
Audrey Sutter needs to get home to Minnesota to see her father, a retired sheriff who is dying of cancer, and a fellow college student volunteers to drive her. The car plunges into the Black Root River just outside their destination, and only Audrey survives. The incident recalls a similar one from 10 years earlier, an unsolved murder that haunts Audrey's father—and that Audrey feels moved to solve. *PW*'s starred review called the thriller "outstanding": "The nuanced plot delves deep into how a community—and surviving relatives—deal with the aftermath of a death."



The Last House Guest

Megan Miranda, Simon & Schuster, June 2019

From the author of *All the Missing Girls* (433,000 print copies sold) comes the tale of an unlikely childhood friendship that ends in tragedy. In the harbor community of Littleport, Maine, it's rare for a local and a kid from a family of wealthy vacationers to bond, but Avery Greer and Sadie Loman remain close for 10 summers, until their early 20s, when Sadie, the local girl, is found dead in what police deem a suicide. A year later, the still-grieving Avery is certain people in the community blame her, and sets out to learn what really happened.



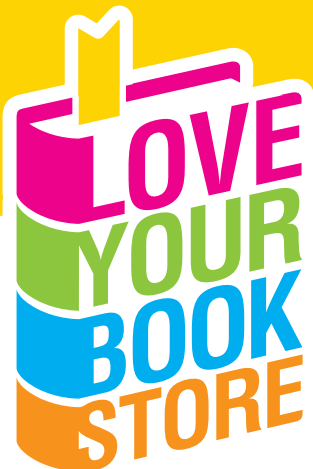
Run Away

Harlan Coben, Grand Central, Mar. 2019

In Coben's first novel since moving to Grand Central with his longtime editor Ben Sevier, a father learns that his estranged daughter has been spotted in New York City's Strawberry Fields playing guitar. Simon follows up on the lead and finds her strung out, a shadow of the girl he remembers—and she runs from him. And so he chases after her, into the dark underworld of addiction and something far stranger.

—G.B.





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False Pretenses

From Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr. Ripley* to more recent books including *The Lying Game*, psychologically twisted fiction is, by its nature, full of deception. These books dress the classic setup in new disguises.

An Anonymous Girl

Greer Hendricks and Sarah Pekkanen, St. Martin's, Jan. 2019

Jessica Farris, a make-up artist struggling to make ends meet, fabricates her way into a psychology study of ethics and morality conducted by Dr. Lydia Shields, only to discover as it progresses that she's taking part in a much more sinister kind of experiment. The second collaboration between Hendricks and Pekkanen follows their 2018 hit *The Wife Between Us* (126,000 print copies), and alternates between Jessica's first-person and Dr. Shields's second-person narration. *PW*'s starred review said the book delivers "major league suspense."

Golden State

Ben H. Winters, Mulholland, Jan. 2019

In the country of Golden State, located in what used to be California, lying is illegal, and Laszlo Ratesic's job for the last 19 years has been to enforce the truth as part of the Speculative Service. As an officer, he is one of the few citizens allowed to speculate, in order to solve crimes. While investigating a supposedly accidental death with a trainee in tow, Ratesic begins to see through the distorted fabric of a world that is supposed to prize absolute truth. This near-future thriller by Edgar winner Winters (*The Last Policeman*) is likely to provoke discussion.

Saving Meghan

D.J. Palmer, St. Martin's, Apr. 2019

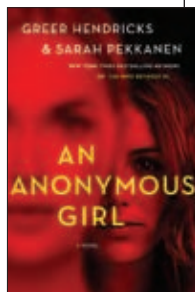
Meghan Girard, age 14, has a history of unexplained illnesses that makes doctors suspect Munchausen syndrome by proxy. But not everyone is so sure—is Meghan's mother Becky ill herself, devoted to a sick child, or could something else be going on? This is Daniel Palmer's first thriller writing as D.J. Palmer, following several books that continued his late father Michael Palmer's popular medical thrillers.

They All Fall Down

Rachel Howzell Hall, Forge, Apr. 2019

The author of the Elouise Norton series riffs on Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None* in this standalone novel, which brings a diverse cast of seven strangers to a remote private island in Mexico. The reason behind the trip—a recently deceased person common to all—only becomes apparent later. What beyond-the-grave game is being played? And will the narrator make it home to Los Angeles and her teen daughter, or will she fall victim to her own sins?

—G.B.



finalist—asked permission of his former colleague Marie Cirile to fictionalize her 1975 book, *Marie Cirile: Memoirs of a Police Officer* (Doubleday, 1975), which details her 20 years on the force. In *The Policewoman's Bureau* (Arcade, May 2019), Conlon zeroes in on the Bronx in 1958 and the daily sexism experienced by Cirile working in what was, and still very much is, a man's world.

Former litigator Amy Impellizzeri, who clerked for two years at a Washington, D.C., federal court, examines how #MeToo plays out in the legal and political arenas in *Why We Lie* (Wyatt-Mackenzie, Mar. 2019). The novel weaves together several narrative threads, all centered on D.C., to look at the ways the powerful tend to escape culpability; characters include a rising political star, a power player who assaults a woman in his corporation and attempts to impede her career, and a woman haunted by the false accusation she made against a real abuser to escape her small town.

Author and former prosecutor Linda Fairstein, who continues to consult on cases, has spent her 45-year legal career focused on sexual violence and crimes against women and children, including a stint as head of the first sex crimes unit in the Manhattan District Attorney's Office, the model for the similar unit in *Law & Order: SVU*. During that time, Fairstein says, there were a number of occasions when she thought the culture had reached a watershed moment—during the Anita Hill hearings, for instance. But then, she says, the status quo would return.

In October 2017, as Fairstein searched for

the right topic for the 20th entry in her series featuring Manhattan prosecutor Alexandra Cooper, she considered whether she wanted to base a milestone book on





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GET IN. STAND OUT.

Noteworthy Debuts

Rookie authors disclose the motives and methods behind their crime novels.

First Case: *Bellini and the Sphinx* (Akashic, Feb. 2019)

Investigator: Tony Bellotto, trans. from the Brazilian Portuguese by Clifford E. Landers

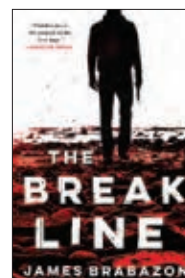
Previously published in Brazilian rock musician Bellotto's native country, the São Paulo-set noir follows private detective Remo Bellini, who is investigating the disappearance of several women connected to the underworld and the related murder of a famed surgeon. Bellotto says he modeled his PI on Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe, and that the plot, which involves prostitutes and live-sex performers, evokes two classically intertwined themes: sex and death.



First Case: *The Break Line* (Berkley, Jan. 2019)

Investigator: James Brabazon

In what *PW*'s starred review called "an adrenaline-charged thriller," British intelligence officer Max McLean, an assassin with a perfect track record, is sent to Sierra Leone on what looks to be a suicide mission. Brabazon, a journalist and filmmaker, has covered numerous conflicts, and says "it was working in Liberia and Sierra Leone during their civil wars that inspired *The Break Line*." The ethical challenges of being forced to rely not just on the good guys, but, at times, on murderers, and the frustration of not being able to fully capture his experiences in nonfiction, led to a realization that "writing fiction could be as authentic and as credible as reportage."



First Case: *Evil Things* (Bitter Lemon, Feb. 2019)

Investigator: Katja Ivar

Ivar's Nordic noir, set during the Cold War, introduces Hella Mauzer, the first female inspector in the Helsinki Homicide Unit. When the wife of an Orthodox priest asks her to investigate the disappearance of a man in a small village on the Soviet border, Mauzer discovers the man was murdered, and that his death may not be the only crime in need of investigation. Ivar says she began the novel as a way to escape the overwhelming "grief and pain" she experienced after suffering a stillbirth, and spent hours poring over artifacts in Finland's National Police Museum. Elements of her past, she says, worked their way into the story, and "it turned out to be a very life-affirming book."



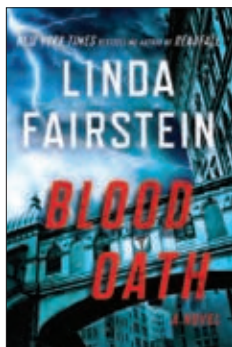
First Case: *The Wolf and the Watchman* (Atria, Mar. 2019)

Investigator: Niklas Natt och Dag

In 1793 Stockholm, a disabled ex-soldier and former night watchman finds a badly mutilated corpse and wants to give the man a proper burial. That means working with Cecile Wing, a lawyer turned detective who is dying from consumption and hopes for a last redemptive act. Natt och Dag says his research included "prowl[ing] every secondhand bookseller in Stockholm and buying everything they had on the era in general, and Stockholm in particular," and that the task quickly "took on the feeling of an inherited responsibility, to speak for the dead." The Swedish Academy of Crime Writers named the book the best debut novel of 2017.



—G.B.



what might have proved to have been a short-lived moment in the news cycle. But when the #MeToo movement continued to pick up steam, she knew exactly the story she wanted to tell. The result, *Blood Oath* (Dutton, Apr. 2019), finds Cooper on a case involving a woman who is speaking out about the abuse she suffered by a high-profile law enforcement official while a witness at a federal trial many

years earlier.

Even after the Brett Kavanaugh Supreme Court confirmation battle, which Fairstein says has uncanny echoes in her novel, the author remains optimistic about the prospects for lasting change. A year after the Weinstein allegations, she says, #MeToo is still front-page news, noting that in earlier times the press and the public were quick to move on. "So that, to me," she says, "is distinctly different than anything that came before."

Gwendia Bond is the author of many novels for young adults and children.



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THE POSSIBILITY OF THE IMPOSSIBLE



Karen Thompson
Walker's second novel,
The Dreamers,
follows the spread
of a mysterious
sleeping sickness

BY EMILY CHENOWETH

Well before we met, I felt as if I knew Karen Thompson Walker. Though this wasn't true, it didn't seem entirely delusional: Portland, Ore., is a small town; we have a dear friend in common; and, three months ago, I'd had lunch with her husband and older daughter at a large writerly gathering at a local brewpub. Thompson hadn't attended, perhaps because it was blisteringly hot that afternoon, or perhaps because she had a six-month-old baby at the time, and instead seized a chance to get some sleep. Sleep, the holy grail of the new (or, in this case, repeat) parent, is the subject, in a way, of Walker's haunting, hypnotic

second novel. *The Dreamers* (Random House, Jan. 2019) takes place in the fictional Southern California mountain town of Santa Lora, where a sickness descends one evening in early fall. A first-year student at the local college leaves a party, goes to bed, and then doesn't wake up; a few days later, she's dead. Soon after, another girl falls asleep. She doesn't die, but nor can she be roused. Though the college attempts to quarantine the students, the sickness spreads, first among the residents of a dorm and then outward: to the janitor who cleaned their rooms, to a clerk at a convenience store, a backpacker, and a young bride, and soon to the doctors and nurses caring for the sick teens, who sleep "like children, mouths open, cheeks flushed.

Author Profile

Breathing as rhythmic as swells on the sea.”

As if the creep of a mysterious sleeping sickness weren't eerie enough, the world around Santa Lora seems to shimmer and vibrate with threat. The mountain lake is vanishing, the region is prone to earthquakes and landslides, and the forest is “fertile for fire.” As Walker's compassionate, omniscient narrator asks, “What if misfortune can be drawn to a place, like lightning to a rod?”

When Walker and I finally meet, outside a pie shop, she has a brilliant smile and a happy, bell-like laugh. A former editor at Simon & Schuster, she is now a professor at the University of Oregon in Eugene, two hours south of Portland. Thankfully, when I tell her that I'm convinced I know her already, she doesn't seem to find this very weird.

On this sunny fall Friday, over the sound of clinking porcelain, as the ice caps melt and the world veers toward autocracy, Walker explains that she took inspiration from Jose Saramago's novel *Blindness*, about an epidemic, and his careerlong fascination with “the possibility of the impossible.” For Walker, the line between what is possible and what's not is “the richest territory” for fiction, in part because the pressure of a catastrophic force serves to illuminate the quotidian. Her bestselling debut, *The Age of Miracles*, imagined the slowing of Earth's rotation and the cataclysmic disruptions this causes for all planetary life—but also, just as powerfully, it chronicled its adolescent narrator's charged, complicated coming-of-age. *The Dreamers* employs similar psychological realism and a disaster that's far less sci-fi: point of fact, there's a “mystery illness” in the headlines on the very day we meet.

When I point this out, Walker laughs her fine laugh again. “Maybe another reason I'm so interested in that particular quality of realism is that I'm someone who's quick to worry and fear,” she says. “And writing is a way of exploring anxiety and frightening scenarios in a way that's satisfying, instead of just horrifying.”

And contagion stories in particular, Walker notes, are compelling because of the way “they inevitably reflect human connections and human bonds.” In a plague novel, it's the outsiders—another favorite subject of hers—who stay safest. That's because, as *The Dreamers* tells us, the sickness travels most easily “through all the same channels as do fondness and friendship and love.”

When Walker began writing *The Dreamers*, she didn't know what her sickness should look like—a flu, first taking hold in a college dorm, perhaps. She was living in Iowa City at the time, while her husband was enrolled in the MFA program at the University of Iowa (Walker's MFA is from Columbia). But one night—and here is the magic thing, “the thing that seems too good to be true,” she admits—the idea for the disease came to

her in a dream. “When I realized that sleep would be the main symptom of this strange sickness,” she says, “I knew I'd arrived in my favorite fictional territory: those places in human experience where the uncanny or the extraordinary exists rights alongside the everyday.”

In the everyday of *The Dreamers*, sisters and couples fight, children trick-or-treat, bonds form and break, and “a secret cluster of cells” implants itself in a sleeping woman's womb. The present-tense narrative telescopes in and out, pulling back to give a panoramic view of the situation, then zooming close as individual, intimate stories play out against the backdrop of the crisis. The disease is determined to be airborne, and soon the entire town is cordoned off. In the outside world, conspiracy theories abound; within, the dreamers' brains show “more activity... than has even been recorded in any human brain—

awake or asleep.”

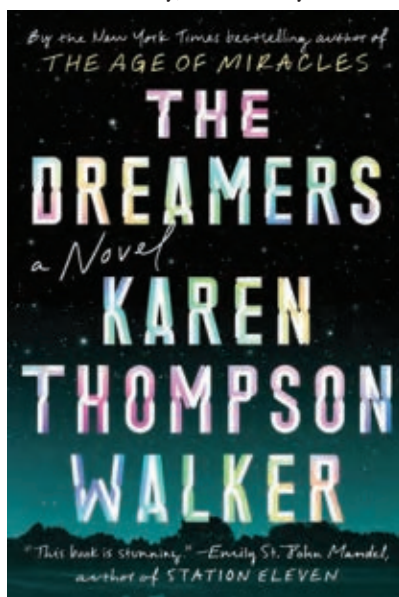
Walker gives us numerous carefully drawn characters in *The Dreamers*, but she began this novel, like her first, not with a person, but with a question: what if sleep became contagious? Or, as in *The Age of Miracles*, what if “light became unhooked from day, darkness unchained from night”? What would happen in such unprecedented circumstances?

Walker cites Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* as “a master class for me in how to blend speculative elements with psychological and emotional realism.” Marilyn Robinson's *Housekeeping* and Julie Otsuka's *The Buddha in the Attic* were also influences, she says, and Ann Patchett's *Bel Canto* served as a model for how to follow a large cast of imperiled characters.

The heady premise of *The Dreamers* allowed Walker to investigate the complexities of consciousness, the foundations of morality, and the very nature of what we understand to be reality. But if that sounds grand and cosmic, there is also the tiny sweetness of a father teaching his baby new words (“This is our shadow, yours and mine, long on the sidewalk because the sun is low in the sky at this time of year”) and the hesitant flush of new love (“Here he is beside her. Here is his hand, laced in hers at the end of the day”).

And here, in this Portland café, there is the chatter of neighboring tables, the steamy hiss of the cappuccino machine. There's the sun shining outside, and soon it will be the weekend, and, in a few days, Walker will write to say that she got the sickness she didn't use in fiction: a stomach flu. But—spoiler alert—unlike a handful of her characters, she very quickly gets better. ■

Emily Chenoweth is the coauthor, with Johnny Marciano, of Klawde: Evil Alien Warlord Cat, forthcoming in February.





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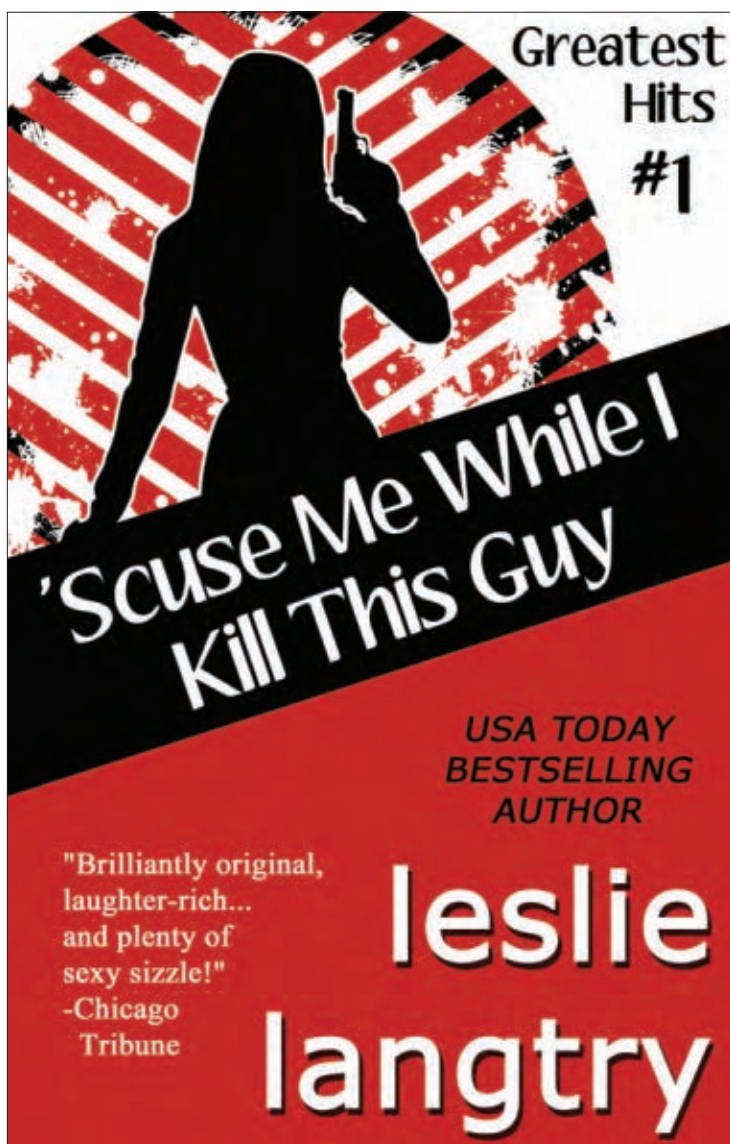
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The Fans Are Out There

[How Leslie Langtry found her readers](#)

BY MATIA BURNETT

Leslie Langtry's writing career began in the second grade, when she wrote a story about a family camping trip gone wrong. When the kids in her class laughed, she says she was "hooked." In college, she focused on political science, Soviet studies, and art administration. But her love for writing—and making readers laugh—never left her. As she neared age 40, she joined a writer's group and wrote three books, which she says she subsequently "buried in the backyard after a ritual burning, so no one would ever, ever read them."

But, after Langtry wrote for a couple more years, her husband challenged her to sell a book in one year. The result of that effort



Leslie Langtry

was 2007's *'Scuse Me While I Kill This Guy*, the first book in what would become the Greatest Hits Mysteries series. She sold the first book to Dorchester Publishing, followed by the next four titles in that series. Her publishing story gets a little twisty after that.

Around 2011, Langtry got the rights back to the Greatest Hits books and decided to give the indie route a try, republishing the original Greatest Hits books herself in order to reach a broader readership. They were later picked up again by a small mystery press, Gemma Halliday Publishing. "Working with Gemma has been incredible, and I've hit the *USA Today* bestseller list under her guidance," the author says.

Langtry's other series include eight Merry Wrath books and two books in Gemma Halliday Publishing's Aloha Lagoon series. She has recently self-published a Greatest Hits novella, as well as two horror books, and is looking to self-publish four additional books across two series in the next year. Langtry describes

her books as "cozy comedies" because they have elements that fall into the cozy category, but "they seem to make people other than my mother laugh."

Langtry says she has always been a fan of mysteries: "I read my first Nancy Drew in the third grade. At some point, I graduated to Agatha Christie by stealing my mother's books off her nightstand and blaming it on my sister."

Recurring themes find their way into Langtry's books. There's one leitmotif in particular: animals, including a rabbit, skunk, raccoon, and owl, grace the covers of the Merry Wrath books. In this case, art imitates life. "I think it's safe to say we have a problem," Langtry says. "We have three dogs, three cats, and a disturbingly large mini lop bunny we

inherited after our daughter broke up with her boyfriend." Other past animals have included turtles, parakeets, zebra finches, guinea pigs, and an iguana named Cedric.

Langtry also writes a lot about the Girl Scouts, having spent 10 years as a troop leader: "I must admit my hilarious and precocious troop gave me a lot of material to work with. Some people are surprised when they find out that many of the more absurd incidents in my books actually happened."

Langtry writes funny books, but writing is not all fun and games. "Someone once said, 'Dying is easy—comedy is hard'—and they're right," she says. "I've written straight books without humor, and I can write those in half the time I write my comedies. The trickiest part is having the right balance of comedy mixed with serious life-and-death situations."

With 23 books and additional short stories both traditionally published and self-published, Langtry has earned her merit badges. She believes that self-publishing has meaningfully transformed the landscape—perhaps most significantly by allowing for more fluid parameters between genres.

Langtry is confident that, as long as authors put out the best versions of the best books they can write, readers will come: "You can write a space opera/sweet romance/werefrog novel with nonfiction elements, and you can find an audience who will eat that up." Her next book, perhaps? ■



BookLife Talks with Jude Miller Burke, PhD

Psychologist and business coach Miller Burke helps readers turn childhood challenges into adult successes.

Why did you write *The Adversity Advantage*?

Twenty-five years of counseling and coaching successful men and women in large and small companies have led me to believe that there is a predictable journey from childhood hardship to career and personal success. I wanted to illuminate this process with scientific data and interviews to take years off a difficult and confusing process. I grew up in a troubled family and, through many difficulties, detours, and obstacles, became successful. The research-based, up-to-date information and heartfelt stories I have gathered will ease the way forward for others.

Tell us a little bit about your research into childhood adversity and the people whose stories inform this book.

I conducted a scientific research study of 310 highly successful men and women—CEOs, artists, psychologists, and community leaders—half of whom were self-made millionaires, who grew up in lower-income to middle-class families. Among the study group, 40% experienced childhood abuse, witnessed abuse, or had an alcoholic parent, which is higher than the national norm. These challenges did not keep them from achieving a high level of success, however.

Did you find that childhood adversity affects men and women differently?

Both men and women reported experiencing childhood abuse, witnessing familial abuse, and experiencing alcoholism in their families. This is a surprise to many people. In addition, the pathway to success for men and women is more similar than different. However, women—as reported by men and women—experience more prejudice and discrimination while seeking financial, professional, and leadership success. Women also absorb the second shift of childcare

and household responsibilities, even when they generate a larger portion of the family income. The more childhood adversity the women experienced, the more likely they were to take control of their lives by starting and owning their own businesses.

The men in my study group experienced more childhood abuse and witnessed more family abuse than the women did. Both sexes developed perseverance and flexibility on their career paths, had a protective work style, and struggled with self-esteem and relationships at work. However, they became students of the skills they did not learn at home, which helped launch them to success. Both sexes also used detours and failures to launch them into new opportunities.

Who is your ideal reader and why?

The ideal reader for this book is someone who experienced childhood hardship, or knows someone who has, and wants to learn well-researched and easily described ways to transform this adversity into personal and workplace strengths.

Why or how do you think this book is particularly relevant now?

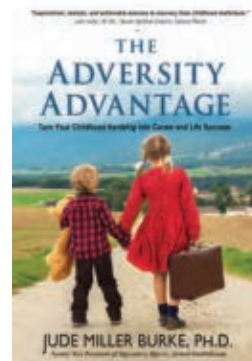
Society is growing increasingly accepting of the idea that childhood forms who we are as adults, creating both healthy and unhealthy habits that may hinder or help us. This is a book that will help readers manage their childhood “triggers” at

home and at work to move forward toward success. Learning how to maximize positive behaviors and to minimize negative coping strategies is absolutely possible. All it takes is practice.

What is the one thing you most want to tell people about you or your book?

This is the only easy-to-read inspirational book that outlines specific steps on the journey from childhood hardship to adult success. The lasting, serious effects of childhood abuse, alcoholism, and poverty on one’s mental and physical health are described along with clear strategies for recovery. Readers will learn that they can drop that heavy old friend, childhood trauma, for lighter and brighter futures.

For more information, visit booklife.com/burke



Cover Redesign

This month, Michelle Argyle at Melissa Williams Design reimagines the cover of *Dreams of the Turtle King* by indie author Denise Bossarte, who praised the new cover, saying it “captured the essence” of her book

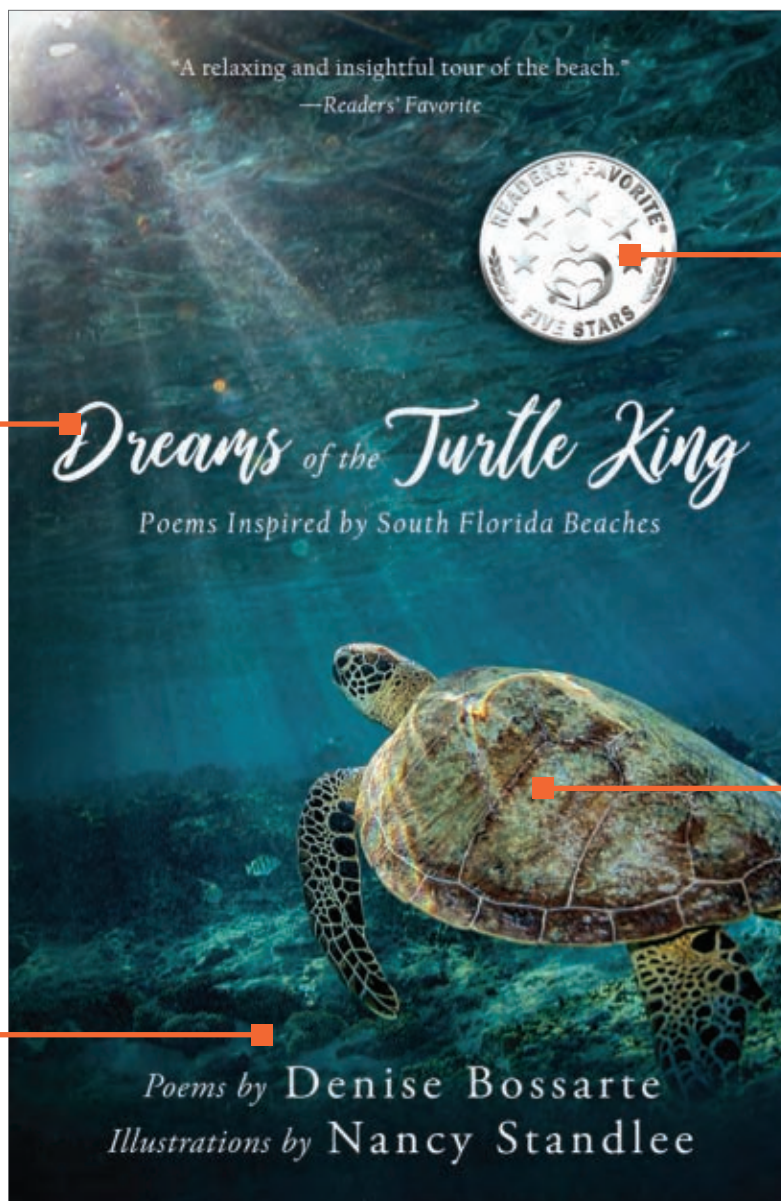
To submit a book for a free cover redesign, [email us at booklifeeditor@booklife.com](mailto:booklifeeditor@booklife.com).



Original Cover

The author wanted a “dreamy” feel, so we chose a title font that is sophisticated but hints at a bit of whimsy.

Instead of putting a drop shadow behind the text, which might add to the cluttered feel, I created a dark gradient to make the text and turtle stand out.



When a cover showcases an award seal, it’s important to design around that element instead of placing it over the title. I chose a background photo that allowed me to do this.

While the illustrated cover is beautiful, the watercolor and font choices felt too juvenile for the content and intended readership. A photo and different fonts dramatically change the tone and feel.

BookLife Talks with Marianne Spampinato

Erma Bombeck fans will delight in Spampinato's humorous take on Mother knowing best.

What is the story behind *Listen to Your Mother*—what inspired you to write it?

I am a columnist and freelance correspondent for *Our Town*, a local weekly newspaper in Somerset County, Pa. Readers have told me that they especially enjoy my columns about my rescue dog, Galla, and my relationship with my mom. Inspired by this response, I came up with the idea for *Listen to Your Mother* during the summer of 2017. My mother has always told me I have a book inside of me. I finally listened to her.

Tell us about your mother. What was she like when you were a child?

We didn't have the stereotypical "Wait till your father gets home" family; my mom was the disciplinarian. Like her mom, she managed the family budget and paid the bills. Like her dad, who was a gifted craftsman, she can figure out all sorts of things. Mom has great inner strength and knows her own mind. She made many sacrifices, including going back to work full-time when I was in elementary school, so we could have a better life.

Did you always follow your mother's advice? What about the times when you didn't?

I have pretty much ignored her warning not to eat chocolate because it makes your face break out, as well as her advice to not snack. My mom also advised, "Don't rush; take your time." One unfortunate day, I ignored this and another of her warnings, namely not to wear cuffed pants, as I'm a bit of a klutz. I was rushing around doing errands during my lunch break and caught the heel of my shoe in the cuff of the other pant leg. I fractured my left big toe and was given crutches, which meant people around me were in for more comedy.

How are things different today than when you grew up?

I grew up knowing my grandparents and seeing aunts, uncles, and cousins on a regular basis. Such family ties reinforced our shared heritage and accumulated wisdom. Today, we're much more mobile. In

our area, many had to relocate for work, especially after Bethlehem Steel and U.S. Steel closed local mills. My cousins and their children, as well as the children of many friends, are spread out across the United States. Since more women work outside the home than when my mom returned to work full-time, children are in day care or are watched by people outside the family. Life has also dramatically changed due to technology, the internet, and social media. These changes aren't necessarily bad—I keep in touch with distant relatives and friends on Facebook—but today children are growing up in an environment far different from the one I grew up in.

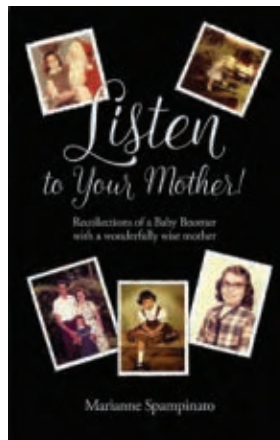
Who is your ideal reader and why?

I've heard from many people around my age that *Listen to Your Mother* brought back precious memories of their own moms. I know one woman who bought my book for her daughter when she was expecting her first child. An older woman bought it as a wedding gift for her granddaughter. Although women may relate more to the book, I've also received positive feedback from men.

What is the one thing you most want to tell readers, other writers, booksellers, publishers, or agents about you or your book?

Listen to Your Mother is a slice-of-life book. Readers are bound to relate to some of the sayings and anecdotes. The book is available on madeinsomersetcounty.com and on Amazon. Wholesale bulk orders may be arranged with the *Daily American*, parent company of *Our Town*. Please contact me at mts1304@gmail.com and I will forward requests to the publisher. You can also find me on Twitter @mts_wrtr and on Facebook @Listen2urMother.

For more information, visit booklife.com/spampinato



Meet the Judges

The semifinal round of the 2018 BookLife Prize will be judged by six bestselling and award-winning authors

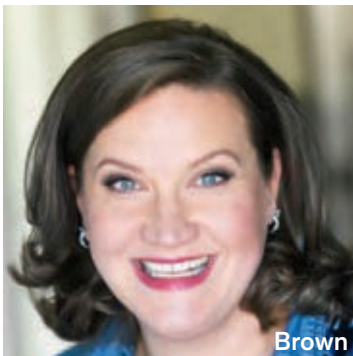
BY DANIEL LEFFERTS

In its third year, the BookLife Prize—an annual writing contest sponsored by *Publishers Weekly* and BookLife—received more than 900 submissions. Of those, 30 books advanced to the semifinals. From there, a panel of six judges selected six titles to advance to the finals. The grand prize winner, set to be announced on December 17, will be selected by the judges and *PW*'s editorial staff. *PW* caught up with the six BookLife Prize judges to talk about self-publishing, writing, and a whole lot more.

Eleanor Brown: The Power of an Editor

Is there a difference between self-published and traditionally published work? According to Eleanor Brown, a returning judge and the author of three traditionally published novels, there sometimes is, but it's not what one would expect.

"The difference I find is not about the writing but about the editorial process," Brown says. "Folks who choose to self-publish—their writing and their stories are often just as good. But someone else weighing in could have helped them strengthen the book."



That's why Brown thinks it's a good idea for self-published authors to work with editors or critical readers, even if they're still in the middle of a project. Editorial insight,

even on a single story or chapter, can be useful in the long term, she says.

Brown knows the value of editorial advice firsthand. "I have a tendency to want a really happy, tight, tidy ending," she says. "With my first novel, my editor said, 'This is too tidy.' So, I always make sure I untie it just a little bit at the end."

As a judge, Brown looks for signs of editorial

sophistication in submissions: "Making sure the story arc is satisfying without being obvious. Making sure the question the story is answering is the same one it asks at the beginning. Making sure loose ends are tied up, that subplots and themes are rich enough to support something book length." Working with an editor on these and other matters, she says, can help indie authors "take their work to the next level."

And BookLife Prize entrants are clearly committed enough to their work to take that step, Brown says. "If people are serious enough to enter and serious enough to get to this stage, it usually means they're serious enough to have developed their work until it's something really solid."

Brown selected *Anne and Louis* by Rozsa Gaston for the BookLife Prize finals, calling it "a lively, engaging story, rich with historical detail."

Adam Croft: The Elusive Happy Ending

The story of Adam Croft's self-publishing career is the kind that inspires novice writers. Since 2011, when he self-published his first crime novel, *Too Close for Comfort*, through Amazon's Kindle Direct program, Croft has sold hundreds of thousands of books. As of 2016, according to a profile in the *Guardian*, his proceeds were up to almost \$3,000 per day.

But Croft advises aspiring writers not to read too much into such tales. "People often see the success stories out there and think it's easily or quickly emulated," he says. "It's very, very possible, but it does require applied effort over time."

Croft gained renown with his 2015 novel *Her Last Tomorrow*, which sold 150,000 copies in the first five months after its publication. "The truth is that was my ninth book," he says. "It's a case of sticking with it."



Croft does believe

in the power of self-publishing, however. After he published *Her Last Tomorrow*, the author signed a book deal with Amazon, but later ended his relationship with the company and says he wouldn't work with a traditional publisher again. "Not unless the deal was extraordinary," he says. "I've been there, and it's nowhere near as good."

In Croft's view, the line between self-publishing and traditional publishing has blurred to the point of almost no longer existing. The self-published authors "who do it properly tend to use the same editors and the same cover designers as a traditional publishing house," he says.

For readers of crime novels, of course, it's the story that counts. According to the *Guardian*, in 2017 crime overtook general and literary fiction as the most popular book genre in the U.K. That doesn't surprise Croft. "I think the reason for that is that we seek happy endings," he says. "We like to see the bad guys get caught."

Croft selected *A Lady and Gentleman in Black* by Kelly Jameson for the BookLife Prize finals, calling the book a "fascinating and intriguing twist on the crime genre."

Julie Powell: The "Tricky Genre"

After an author publishes her first memoir, does she start looking at her life as a potential second memoir? For a while after writing her bestselling debut memoir, *Julie & Julia* (which later became a film starring Amy Adams and Meryl Streep), Julie Powell, a returning judge, did. She compares the experience to affecting an "authentic" personality on social media.

"On social media I try to present myself in an unvarnished way," Powell says. "But, still, you're composing: 'Oh, this is an incident.' All of us do some of that now."

For memoirists, though, it can be more extreme. "Immediately after writing *Julie & Julia*, I was definitely like, 'What does this mean? How is this going to weave into the warp and weft?' " she says. "I've kind of let go of that now, maybe just because my life is really boring."

After all, for Powell, a good memoir is one that brings context to a life, rather than one that focuses on its every particular. "Memoir is a tricky genre," she says. "You want to hear this person's innermost unique thoughts. At the same time, you don't want to spend 300 pages reading navel-gazing."

Memoirs also need to balance pathos with humor. Readers don't want to feel that they're "slogging through the Bataan Death March of despair all the time," Powell says. "Levity is a vital thing." But at the same time, it shouldn't come at the expense of

seriousness, she notes. "There's a difference between bringing humor and warmth to a story that might have some difficulties and being blithe and glib.



Powell

Glib is the enemy of memoir."

Powell also says that she finds herself drawn to memoirs by people with a "vastly different—or even subtly different—experience" than she's previously encountered.

"You want your eyes open to something you haven't seen before," she adds. "There are only so many memoirs I can read about middle-aged white ladies having a renaissance."

Powell selected *Of Monkey Bridges and Bánh Mi Sandwiches* by Oanh Ngo Usadi for the BookLife Prize finals, praising the author's "empathy and vivid storytelling."

Tim Pratt: Honor Thy Fans

Tim Pratt, a returning judge, began his career in self-publishing in order to feed his fans. In 2009, he published the fourth book in his Marla Mason series, about an adventurous witch, with Bantam Spectra, which was then a Random House imprint.

Around that time, the industry entered dire straits. "About a third of publishing was laid off," Pratt says—including his editor. The Marla Mason series looked to be dead.

Pratt had ended the fourth book in the series on a cliffhanger; he and his editor had planned to publish a fifth title. When it became evident that the series would not continue, readers wrote to him expressing frustration that the story had been left unresolved.

Pratt decided to serialize the fifth title on his website. He set up a PayPal account for readers who wanted to pay for the book. He ended up taking in five figures.

Since then, Pratt has self-published myriad novels and short stories, sometimes collaborating with a small publisher on distribution and design. These include several more titles in the Marla Mason series, which he crowdfunds on Kickstarter. His income from these books tends to be similar to his income from traditionally published works. Random House paid him \$20,000 per book in the Marla Mason series. The Kickstarter campaigns for self-published Marla Mason titles have brought as much as \$18,000 per book.



Still, Pratt likes to keep a foot in the door of traditional publishing, partly to grow the readership for his self-published output. "I'm fundamentally a lazy person, so if I can have a publisher get my books out in front of tens of thousands of people through their distribution channels, I like that," he says.

Pratt isn't actually all that lazy. He works full-time as a senior editor at the science fiction and fantasy magazine *Locus*. He has one weekday off, Thursday, and that's his writing day. "I have no hobbies," he jokes. "I write, and I hang out with my kids."

Given that Pratt lives and breathes science fiction and fantasy, he's looking for entries that feel fresh: books that couldn't just as well have come from a mainstream publisher and that don't fit an already robust niche in the genre.

Pratt selected *Fid's Crusade* by David H. Reiss for the BookLife Prize finals, calling it "one of the most refreshing and lively takes on the superhero genre I've seen in years."

Rebecca Sky: Know Your Audience

By the time Rebecca Sky published her debut novel, *Arrowheart*, with Hodder Children's Books earlier this year, she already had millions of readers. That's because she originally published the novel in serial format on the user-generated storytelling platform Wattpad. At present, *Arrowheart*, which is about a mermaid who can turn any man she kisses into a merman, has been read more than 12 million times on that website.



vision," she says.

It also helped Sky shape her story so as to maximize reader satisfaction. "I was learning what my readers were anticipating as I was writing," she says. "I was able to change direction or surprise them."

Sky no longer publishes on Wattpad, but she

publishing on Wattpad, Sky says, helped her hone her craft. With millions of people reading each installment of the book, "I learned how to take feedback and assess what worked for me and worked for my story and my

remains connected to the community of readers and fellow writers she found there. She's also drawing on her experience in publishing to counsel writers who are just starting out. In addition to judging contests such as the BookLife Prize, she works as a mentor with Pitch Wars, a program through which established writers help novices find agents.

"I'm picking writers out of the slush pile who I think have what it takes," Sky says. It would appear that she has good instincts. All her mentees thus far have landed agents, and a mentee of hers from two years ago went on to sign a six-figure book deal.

Sky's success story might inspire first-time writers to publish their work as soon as possible, but she advises caution. "Once you put your work out there, that's it," she says. "That's your first work. Don't rush into that."

Sky also recommends that writers do their research. "Take time to explore the genre," she says. "Read a lot of what's been successful in self-publishing and what's been successful in traditional publishing and compare that to your work."

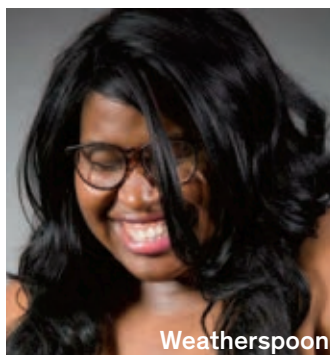
Sky selected *Ray vs. the Meaning of Life* by Michael F. Stewart for the BookLife Prize finals. "This author has a new fan in me," she says.

Rebekah Weatherspoon: Creating Space for Diversity

According to her website, Rebekah Weatherspoon, a returning judge, has held the following jobs: "library assistant, meter maid, middle school teacher, B-movie production assistant, reality show crew chauffeur, D-movie producer, and her most fulfilling job to date, lube and harness specialist at an erotic boutique in West Hollywood." In addition to all that, of course, she's built a career as a romance author. Though she started out as a self-published author, she eventually began working with traditional presses and recently signed a deal with Kensington.

Given Weatherspoon's robust résumé, it's perhaps no surprise that her first advice to novice writers is to figure out what kind of authorial output they can sustain. "I don't write as fast as some really prolific authors," she says. "I can't set myself up for, say, a Nora Roberts career. I just don't write that fast. It's important for people to sit down, think about what resources and tools they have at hand, what kind of time they have."

It's also important for writers to take care of themselves. "Sleep is really important," Weatherspoon says. "If you're sleep-deprived, you're not going to put out a good book, or it's going to take you even longer."



Weatherspoon

Weatherspoon finds it odd that, in the writing world, people don't often talk about the actual labor of composition. At writing conferences and seminars she's attended, "there's always a lot talk about what to do after you finish your book, and there's not a lot of

talk about finishing the book," she says. "A lot of people who are thinking about publishing or working toward publishing, they haven't really sat down and thought about finishing the book yet."

And, ideally, when that book is finished, it'll offer readers something they haven't been expecting. As a judge, Weatherspoon says, she's looking for something "a little bit different."

That reflects her tastes as a reader more generally. When Weatherspoon looks for stories that reflect her experience, she often looks to self-published books. "I'm a black queer woman," she says. "It's

easier for me to find more romance novels with black heroines and queer people in the self-published realm. There are plenty of wonderful traditionally published books by black women. But there aren't as many."

Weatherspoon runs the website WOC in Romance to promote the work of women of color in the genre, and her community of fellow readers shares her sentiments. "We share new releases every week, and 80% of the books we share are self-published," she says.

Does Weatherspoon think that self-publishing is putting pressure on traditional publishing to be more diverse? "I would hope so," she says. "But I think if the pressure were actually there, traditional publishers would have done something about it already. And they haven't."

Weatherspoon selected *After the Gold* by Erin McRae and Racheline Maltese for the BookLife Prize finals, calling the book "a light yet magnetic tale of life and love." ■

Daniel Lefferts is a writer living in New York.



The opiate epidemic is the worst man-made epidemic in the history of mankind. Colbert details the origin of the epidemic along with the corruption and greed that continue to fuel it. Unless the infiltration of Big Pharma throughout government agencies is realized and those profiting from that are brought to account, we will never see the end of the epidemic.

"Colbert's passion for her cause is evident throughout this book, and she makes a convincing case for the complicity of medical professionals who profit from dispensing large quantities of drugs..."

- Kirkus Reviews

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Seven Branding Tips For Indie Authors

How writers can build stronger brands and sell more books

BY MARK COKER



Mark Coker

Readers seek out books by their favorite authors. How does an author achieve the level of awareness, trust, and admiration needed to become a favorite author? It all starts with branding.

Think of an author brand as a bundle of perceptions and expectations that form in readers' minds over time. A brand is a promise; it's what readers expect from an author.

Strong brand affinity is the reason readers select an author's self-published books over other books. Brand is how authors build durable careers.

Authors with strong brands enjoy numerous marketing advantages over those whose brands are weaker. For example, authors with strong brands are more likely to earn coveted book reviews and retailer merchandising. The results of such wins then feed into a self-reinforcing cycle that generates more readership, greater visibility, and more sales.

Authors with strong brands can also command higher prices for their books. In fact, the prices authors select for their books convey a promise about their brands.

Smart brand building is how unknown authors become known authors. Here are seven tips to help authors cultivate stronger brands:

1. Visualize the destination. Although it's possible to build a strong brand by accident, most bestselling indie authors get there with deliberate planning and execution. Each author's brand is found at the intersection of the author's true capabilities and his or her desired brand perception. Authors must visualize what they want their

brands to represent to readers, visualize the experiences that their books will deliver to readers, visualize the legacies they want to leave with their writing, and be accurate in their marketing claims.

2. Present a unified front. If self-published authors want readers to know and respect their brands, then they must take steps to ensure that their books make good first impressions. This means professional cover designs and common design themes across their lists to make books more recognizable to fans.

Although experienced indie authors claim they already know the importance of this, the truth is that most authors fall short of their potential. Great cover design is so affordable that there's simply no excuse for skimping. If an author writes a series, the covers should share a unified design theme, all the way down to the colors, typestyles, layout, and emotional feel. Whether an author writes series or standalones, there should be common design elements that run through every cover for every book—and the same goes for author websites, social media profiles, and all marketing communications. Such unified elements foster familiarity and make it easier for fans to recognize an author's work.

3. Provide a consistent experience. What's the emotional or intellectual experience that readers can expect from an author's books, and does that experience align with the author's brand identity? Consistency fosters familiarity, trust, and confidence. Think of Starbucks coffee. A customer can expect that a Starbucks pumpkin spice latte

purchased in Dallas will taste the same as a Starbucks pumpkin spice latte purchased in Denver or Detroit.

The customer knows what to expect both from Starbucks the coffee chain and from each individually branded Starbucks custom coffee. The customer's confidence in the brand is reinforced with every purchase.

4. Always delight. It's difficult to earn reader trust but easy to squander it. As I've written in previous columns, good books aren't good enough anymore. With a glut of high-quality, low-cost books out there, only super-fabulous books drive positive brand development for their authors. If an author's books don't take readers to an emotionally satisfying extreme, every time, then the books aren't good enough.

5. Continuously improve. It can be difficult for authors to recognize their own shortcomings. Authors should keep open minds, seek out critical feedback, and always aim to continuously improve their implementation of best practices.

6. Practice ethical marketing. Ethics and honesty are essential to successful author branding. Without ethics and honesty, it's impossible to build reader trust. We've all heard stories of authors who cut ethical corners, like paying shills to give them artificially glowing reviews. We've all seen or read authors who promised one thing with their covers, book titles, or book descriptions but delivered another. Such actions sully an author's brand. We remember these authors for the wrong reasons.

7. Don't pee in the pool. Be a nice person. No one likes mean, inconsiderate people. Publishing is a people business. Authors' brand perceptions are shaped by every interaction—online and offline—that they have with readers and fellow publishing industry professionals. Be the author who contributes sunshine, helpfulness, and gratitude to the party. Be the author others want to elevate. ■

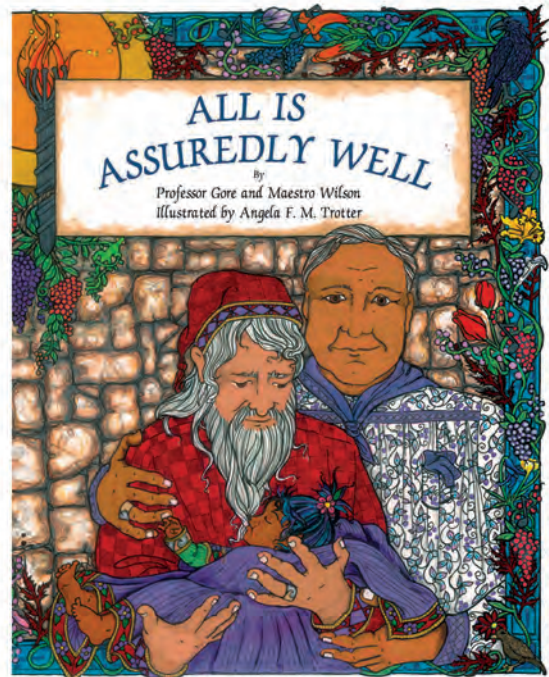
Mark Coker is founder of Smashwords and author of the Smashwords Book Marketing Guide.

King Phillip and his husband, The Most Excellent Don Carlos, live contentedly until King Phillip is called to The Hero's Journey to earn the right to a baby girl to complete their family.

"Gore... and debut author Wilson offer a charming fable with an effective fairy-tale cadence; the king's struggles... echo the real-life difficulties of adoption, surrogacy, and similar steps toward creating a family. Adoptees should appreciate how desired the baby is, and Phillip and Don Carlos' mutual affection remains touching. The Arthur Rackham-like images in lavender-blue tones by debut illustrator Trotter are a gorgeous, striking plus, beautifully detailed with flower, bird, vine, and fruit motifs. Sweet characters, skillful storytelling, and knockout illustrations."

- Kirkus Reviews, Starred Review

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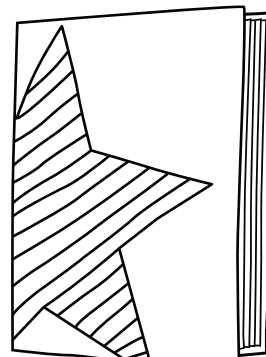


ISBN 978-9998880-0-1

Published by
Camille Lancaster Literary Children's Books

Scouting Report

In this month's roundup of the best-reviewed BookLife titles, we highlight a pair of historical romances, a work of urban fantasy, a mystery about abducted animals, and a novel set in a world still plagued by the War of the Roses.



★ Stolen

LINDA J. WRIGHT

Synopsis: This series kickoff introduces Kieran Yates, a former Crown Counsel, who has left practicing law to work as an investigator of crime related to animals.

PW's Takeaway: Wright combines her passionate commitment to animal

rights with a riveting whodunit that's not dependent on murder to sustain interest.

Comparable Titles: Robin Lamont's *The Chain* and *The Trap*

Sample Line: "I brooded. I drank immoderately. I bathed irregularly. I ate seldom and unwisely. I shut off my phone. I was becoming more and more unhinged, and I knew it."

Read the Review:

publishersweekly.com/9781732359307



★ The Cost of Hope

G.S. CARR

Synopsis: Carr delivers a poignant message about the meaning of freedom in the first Cost of Love historical.

PW's Takeaway: The message about freedom not always being simple is significant and well conveyed without

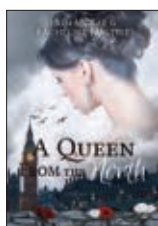
being preachy or overstated. This well-told historical romance is intense and powerful.

Comparable Title: Alyssa Cole's *An Extraordinary Union*

Sample Line: "Sarah stared into the coffin-sized hole that represented the end of her hope. Mrs. Williams was dead, and with her had died the little protection she provided."

Read the Review:

publishersweekly.com/9781719552233



★ A Queen from the North

ERIN MCRAE AND
RACHELINE
MALTESE

Synopsis: This series kickoff introduces an alternate world in which the Wars of the Roses never ended.

PW's Takeaway: A perfect cocktail of intrigue and romance.

Comparable Title: Rachel Hauck's *Once upon a Prince*

Read the Review: publishersweekly.com/9781946192073



★ On the Edge of Daylight

GISSELLE BEAUMONT

Synopsis: A beautifully crafted historical

romance about the journey and eventual sinking of the *Titanic*.

PW's Takeaway: This expertly characterized and tautly plotted story is an impressive debut.

Comparable Title: Danielle Steel's *No Greater Love*

Read the Review: publishersweekly.com/9781980593225



★ Hero Forged

JOSH ERIKSON

Synopsis: Erikson blazes onto the urban fantasy scene with a cornucopia of deceptively

simple worldbuilding and meticulously plotted storytelling.

PW's Takeaway: This is an intricate mystery laced with humor and lore.

Comparable Titles: Jim Butcher's the Dresden Files series

Read the Review: publishersweekly.com/ASINB07CZ51BXD

First Lines

Our monthly look at some of the best first lines from BookLife authors

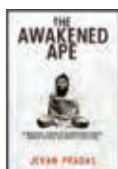
In November, we've got bloody stars, ordinary days, and the joys of going commando. To submit a first line, [email booklifeeditor@booklife.com](mailto:emailbooklifeeditor@booklife.com).



A Day Out of Time

KELSEY CLIFTON

"In Cat's professional opinion, things were already going to shit by the time the pteranodon attacked."



The Awakened Ape

JEVAN PRADAS

"The happiest people in the world don't wear underwear."



Changing Ways

JULIA TANNENBAUM

"I think the world is ending."



Birdseye Chronicles

L.A. GOLDSMITH

"It was an ordinary day in the neighborhood."



The Forgotten Flapper

LAINI GILES

"You know, it's really no fun haunting people who refuse to be afraid of you."



Persistence of Vision

STEVEN DEEBLE

"The stars were covered in blood."



In 1965, a ten-year-old takes a bizarre journey across the South with his wildly violent Dad...and the ghost of a murdered classmate.

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ASIN : B07JZJJGYR



Ask the Editor

A veteran editor answers your writing questions

BY BETTY KELLY SARGENT

Dear Editor:

My dialogue is clunky. Any suggestions? —Fred C.

"Never use an adverb to modify the verb 'said.'" That's rule #4 in "Elmore Leonard's 10 Rules of Writing." I'd call it my rule #1 in writing good dialogue. Doing this is a "mortal sin," according to Leonard. Why?

It's distracting and slows down the plot by telling the reader how the character feels, twice. It seems like an insult to the reader.

" 'I just got a big raise,' Tina said happily." Obviously Tina is happy about this.

" 'You are my best friend,' Tom said honestly." Is there a reason to doubt Tom's honesty?

" 'This thing is about to explode,' George said seriously." Duh!

My other rules:

2. Leave out the small stuff.

"Hey dude, how's your day going so far?" If it's not essential to the exchange between the two characters, leave it out.

3. Listen. Develop your ear for language by listening to

everyone around you—the couple arguing in the restaurant, the kids chatting on the bus. Take notes. Learn to write the way people talk.

4. Read your dialogue aloud. If you find yourself stumbling over words or it sounds stilted to you, it probably is. Back to the drawing board, or rather, your notebook. It's like learning a new language. After a while, it comes naturally.

Betty Sargent

Betty Kelly Sargent is the founder and CEO of BookWorks.

If you have a question for the editor, please email Betty Sargent at booklifeeditor@booklife.com.



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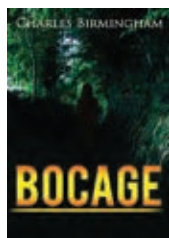
Fiction



Awakening

Jackie Goldman, illus. by Noelia Dickson. Jackie Goldman. \$11.11 paper (200p), ISBN 978-1-72705-462-0
Amazon

A Brooklyn mother who escapes insecurity by secretly penning adventure comic books featuring a glamorous alter ego must decide what to do when real life and fantasy converge.

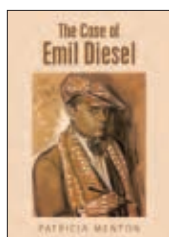


Bocage

Charles Birmingham. Cider Circle Press. \$16.99 paper (422p), ISBN 978-0-692-16520-1
Amazon

In this historical novel, a strange midnight visit draws an American expat living in France into a deadly adventure that pivots between present-day Normandy and the deadly hedgerow fighting of the Allied breakout from Normandy in 1944.

The Case of Emil Diesel



Patricia Menton. Xlibris. \$19.99 paper (223p), ISBN 978-1-984518-39-2
Amazon, BN.com, Xlibris
Inspired by true events, this story has Max Diesel caught in a web of conspiracy as

he fights the East Germans and present-day Germany to reclaim his father's precious art collection.

Christmastime 1939:

Prequel to the Christmastime Series



Linda Mahkovec. Publish. \$2.99 e-book, ASIN B07HPG2T3T
Amazon, Apple iBooks, BN.com, Google Play, Ingram, Kobo, OverDrive
A young widow, Lillian Hapsey, is determined

to give her two small sons a happy Christmas, despite difficulties. Can she rediscover the excitement and magic of Christmas?



The Civil War at Home

Dustin McKissen. Working Class Books. \$9.99 paper (219p), ISBN 978-1-73276-932-8
Amazon
Two suburban men engage in a growing

and deadly feud fed by assumptions about class, race, and the legacy of a horrific crime.



The Junk Yard Solution: Adventures Among the Boxcars and Other Lost Causes

Peter Kelton. Edit Ink

Publishers. \$16.95 paper (262p), ISBN 978-0-692-15390-1

Amazon, BN.com

A bunch of eclectic characters hunker down in abandoned boxcars, fed up with digital life. They tell yarns with comical digs at contemporary society.



Licking the Salt Block

Jan Fink. Fifth Estate Publishing. \$15.99 paper (322p), ISBN 978-1-936533-60-2
Amazon

A young girl grows up with dysfunctional parents in the Deep South during the '50s and '60s, when racial and social prejudices were at their peak.



A Model Mind

Brad Kash. Senior Richardson Publishing. \$16.99 paper (372p), ISBN 978-0-9703272-1-5; \$9.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-73256-811-2
BradKash.com, Amazon.

BN.com, Kobo

Mega '80s rock star Tommy Model loses it all only to find himself on top of the charts again years later after a life-changing experience leads him to find his true love and muse.

Munching on the Sun

Mark Paul Oleksiw. Mark Paul Oleksiw.



\$16.99 paper (296p), ISBN 978-1-77511-112-2
Amazon, BN.com, Chapters
The coming-of-age story of Lukas Wunand, a university student with a darkened soul, and his search for redemption and love.

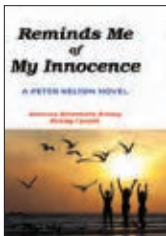
My Husband's Marriage Is Fine, but Mine Isn't: Patience and Trust in God; The Key to a Fulfilling Life



Aretha S. Larsen. iUniverse. \$10.99 paper (98p), ISBN 978-1-5320-3084-0; \$5.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-5320-3085-7
Amazon
After discovering her husband has been living

a second life with another woman, Sarah must find the strength to withstand the crumbling of her marriage.

Reminds Me of My Innocence: Amorous Adventures Among Kissing Cousins



Peter Kelton. Edit Ink Publishers. \$16.95 paper (498p), ISBN 978-0-692-17761-7
Amazon, BN.com, Ingram
This novel traces brotherly and sisterly ties through a lifetime of

misadventures and a journey into absurdity, where Alzheimer's takes the narrator.



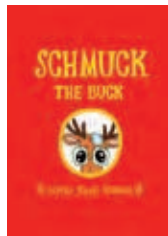
Road to Antietam
Tom E. Hicklin. Palmetto Publishing Group. \$12.99 paper (278p), ISBN 978-1-64111-118-8
Amazon
Daniel and Christopher Galloway are teenagers

when they join the Eighth Ohio Infantry at the beginning of the Civil War. Expecting adventure, they instead find hardship and brutality.

Schmuck the Buck: Santa's Jewish Reindeer

Exo Books, illus. by Karina Shor. Exo Books.

\$22.99 hardcover (60p), ISBN 978-0-9975902-7-2; \$11.99 paper (60p), ISBN 978-0-9975902-9-6



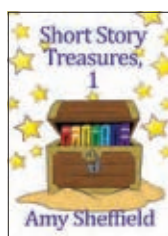
Amazon, Books-a-Million
A modern, satirical take on *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*. This tale of inclusion is for readers who love Christmas, Hanukkah, or both. Illustrated throughout.



Second Thoughts: Second Chances
D.C. Moses. Toplink Publishing. \$15.99 paper (398p), ISBN 978-1-949169-67-6
Amazon, BN.com
Two people of different generations radically change their lives, discovering second chances along the way.

Short Story Treasures, 1

Amy Sheffield. Dorrance Publishing. \$13



paper (136p), ISBN 978-1-4809-3718-5
DorranceBookstore.com
An eclectic mix of short stories that delve into politics, religion, mystery, and much more.

Tales from a Strange Southern Lady

Jan Fink. Fifth Estate Publishing. \$19.95 paper (276p), ISBN 978-1-936533-47-3



Amazon
In these 10 short stories, the characters search for meaning and freedom, struggling with the human capacity for good and evil, the capacity to love,

human frailty, the burden of guilt and sin, and realizing the dark side of their own nature.

Three Women and the River: The Englishman Who Forgot His Own Name

William Harry Harding. Lymer & Hart. \$24.95



paper (374p), ISBN 978-1-73237-530-7
Amazon
Surviving combat and threatened with execution for desertion, a teen from West Kent forges a new family and future in Italy, only to face risking everything again, this time for love.

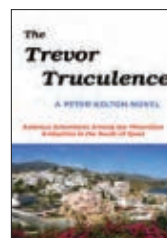
Thursday's Child: An Epic Romance

Joseph Wurtenbaugh. GRealist Ink. \$22.50 paper (665p), ISBN 978-1-5205-1684-4;



\$2.99 e-book, ASIN B079QL4LW7
Amazon
Adele Jansen, a gifted young attorney, takes one step off the career track for an impromptu excursion with a fascinating, mysterious man. But that one step leads her into an odyssey.

The Trevor Truculence: Amorous Adventures Among the Phoenician Antiquities in the South of Spain



Peter Kelton. Edit Ink Publishers. \$16.95 paper (256p), ISBN 978-0-692-17198-1
Amazon, BN.com
A Spanish fishing village is thrust into the modern world as eccentric and

bizarre characters emerge in a parade of lust and occasional betrayal.

Viking Warlord:

A Saga of Thorkell the Great

David K. Mullaly. CreateSpace. \$11.99 paper (327p), ISBN 978-1-72732-550-8; \$2.99



e-book, ASIN B07HY57NWT
Amazon
Thorkell is an old Dane, a survivor of raids and invasions, sharing his life story so that his fame will live on: a historical Viking leader dealing with his past and his mortality.

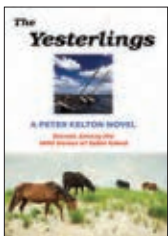
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The Wind's Story
Anne B. Udy. Xlibris.
\$24.19 paper (144p),
ISBN 978-1-5144-4320-0; \$4.99 e-book, ISBN
978-1-5144-4321-7
Amazon

This novel tells of misunderstandings and obstacles, challenging members of two royal families and their servants. It's not always clear who is royal and who is not.

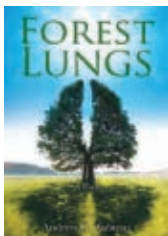
The Yesterlings: Secrets Among the Wild Horses of Sable Island



Peter Kelton. Edit Ink Publishers. \$16.95 paper (330p), ISBN 978-0-692-18313-7
Amazon, BN.com
A yachting expedition to a Canadian island famed for wild horses

and shipwrecks uncovers a hoax in the raw truth of Sable Island.

Poetry



Forest Lungs
Andrew G. Zubinas.
Toplink Publishing.
\$11.99 paper (142p),
ISBN 978-1-947620-15-5
Amazon, BN.com

A book of poetry, exploring healing and art, inspired by the beauty of the Lithuanian language.



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Dylan Saucedo. Dylan Saucedo. \$8 paper (97p), ISBN 978-1-72680-309-0
Amazon
A poetry collection acknowledging bad feelings—feelings many

of us experience and relate to but that often aren't given the attention they deserve.

Tributaries: A Book of Poetry

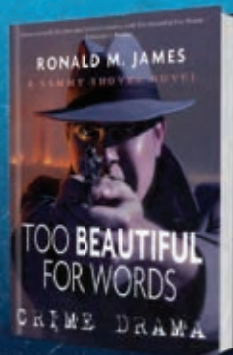
Pamala Ballingham. Earth Mother Productions. \$14.98 paper (152p), ISBN 978-0-922104-36-9

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BY RONALD M. JAMES

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Roger L. Liles. Acorn Publishing. \$24.99



hardcover (456p), ISBN 978-1-947392-28-1; \$15.95 paper (456p), ISBN 978-1-947392-27-4 Amazon, Apple iBooks, BN.com, Google Play, Kobo, Scribd

Spy vs. spy in Cold War

Berlin as America builds a top-secret tunnel under the river Spree to tap into Russian communications links. The Berlin Wall closes, resulting in a crisis.

Death Opens a Window:

Mourning Dove Mysteries, Book 2



Mikel J. Wilson. Acorn Publishing. \$14.95 paper (286p), ISBN 978-1-947392-38-0; \$5.99 e-book, ASIN B07H2669PZ Amazon, Apple iBooks, BN.com, Kobo

As he struggles with the consequences of his last case, Emory Rome returns to investigate another bizarre murder.

Immortal Wounds:

A Doctor Nora Kelly Mystery

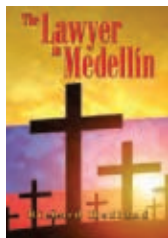
Kate Scannell. Word Haven Media. \$11.99 paper (343p), ISBN 978-1-73257-140-2; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-73257-141-9 Amazon, Apple iBooks, BN.com, Ingram, Kobo



A doctor recovering from a family tragedy is drawn back into her life during a perilous quest to solve the mystery of multiple deaths among the staff at Oakland City Hospital.

The Lawyer in Medellin

Richard Hedlund. New Generation Publishing.



\$6.34 e-book, ASIN B07CQ4JYH9 Amazon
Stuart Gleeman is in Colombia on business. Before he leaves, MI6 asks him for a favor: deliver a parcel to a family in Medellín. What could possibly go wrong?



Let Her Go

D.J. Adamson. Horatio Press. \$14.86 paper (448p), ISBN 978-1-73267-221-5 Amazon
Murder. Betrayal. Love gone wrong.

Understanding how emotional dilemmas strained the family emboldens Lillian Dove to find the prime witness to the Conrad truths.

Murder on the Lake of Fire:

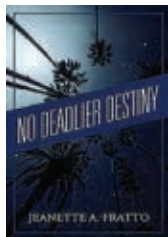
Mourning Dove Mysteries, Book 1

Mikel J. Wilson. Acorn Publishing. \$14.95



paper (316p), ISBN 978-1-947392-06-9 Amazon, Apple iBooks, BN.com, Kobo
Special agent Emory Rome returns to the Smoky Mountains hometown he abandoned

to investigate the bizarre death of an ice-skater and an apparent case of spontaneous human combustion.



No Deadlier Destiny

Jeanette A. Fratto. Outskirts Press. \$14.95 paper (226p), ISBN 978-1-977203-18-2 Amazon, BN.com, Books-a-Million
A probation officer is

forced into hiding when threatened, takes matters into her own hands, and risks all she holds dear.



On the Count of Three

Carolyn Arnold. Hibbert & Stiles Publishing. \$15.99 paper (458p), ISBN 978-1-988353-74-6; \$5.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-988353-73-9 Amazon, BN.com

Being convicted of DUI vehicular homicide made her a target for a serial killer. Now she's missing. Can the FBI save her in time?

Urban Limit

Steve Zell. Tales From Zell. \$14.99 paper (408p), ISBN 978-0-9847468-4-2; \$7.49



audio, ASIN B01MAVOPMF Amazon, Apple iBooks, Audible
While Kristi trains for Olympic gold, her twin brother conquers an online medieval world.

In the Oregon wilderness, their worlds are about to collide.

SF/Fantasy/Horror

...And, Her Name Will Be Called Hagit

Mitchell J. Rycus. CreateSpace. \$8.65 paper (217p), ISBN 978-1-71754-060-7



Amazon
Growing up a black woman of Jewish descent, Hagit eventually becomes the president of the U.S. But her friends notice something strange

happening to her, and what they learn will change the world forever.

Beyond a Veiled Reflection:

Anachronistic Dimensions, Book Two

Christine Church. Grey Horse Press. \$2.99 e-book, ASIN B07DTB2PB6

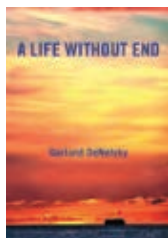


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Can Dane and Meirah's love survive the ultimate betrayal? Readers who've seen Mikaire will now enter Almareyah, where even a mere step into

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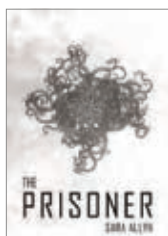
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a puddle of water can mean torture, agony, and death.



A Life Without End
Garland DeNelsky. Xlibris.
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ISBN 978-1-984512-03-1; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN
978-1-984512-04-8
Amazon

Stan Miller, obsessed since childhood with death and the afterlife, is cryonically preserved (frozen). Reanimated in 2068, he is stunned by the dramatically altered world, especially the short-term marriage contracts.



The Prisoner
Sara Allyn. Kindle Direct.
99¢ e-book,
ASIN B07GYLKMMK
Amazon
Imagine a world with no money and no politicians. Imagine a world

where lawyers don't take sides and men and women always get along perfectly well. If only it was safe to go outside.



The Separation
Thomas Duffy.
CreateSpace. \$12.99
paper (306p), ISBN 978-1-983520-87-7
Amazon, BN.com
This is the story of a future where the sexes

are separated at birth and young people aren't allowed to meet (or know about) the opposite sex for the first 22 years of their lives.

Romance/Erotica

All the Wrong Reasons

Jerilee Kaye. CreateSpace. \$3.99 e-book,
ASIN B07JJBG1NX
Amazon, Apple iBooks,
BN.com, Kobo
What happens when a prim and proper virgin has a one-night stand with the city's most wanted playboy?



Chasing Colton's Tail
Todd Aldington. Athlete Raccoon's Books. \$4.99 e-book, ASIN B07J9LC5JJ
Amazon, Apple iBooks, BN.com, Kobo
Todd is an athletic raccoon who's just

come of age and secretly fancies an edgy fox named Colton. They'll share either an unforgettable prom night or a complete disaster.

Nonfiction

The Adversity Advantage: Turn Your Childhood Hardship into Career and Life Success



Jude Miller Burke. Wisdom Editions. \$16.99 paper (165p), ISBN 978-1-939548-67-2
Amazon

Based on a study of 300 men and women who overcame hardships to have personal and workplace success. The book provides real and inspiring stories, insights, and specific techniques.



Alzheimer's with My Mother, Eileen
Jim Dicke II. Orange Frazer Press. \$14 paper (99p), ISBN 978-1-939710-96-3
Orangefrazer.com, Amazon

A candid look at what the Alzheimer's sufferer's family can expect.

The Christians' God Does Not Exist! Yes, He/She Does! It Is Matter That



Does Not Exist!
Proneill F. Johnson Jr. Dorrance Publishing. \$43 paper (870p), ISBN 978-1-4809-4107-6
DorranceBookstore.com
The material universe is one big illusion. All

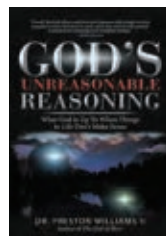
things are spiritual, the manifestation of God. Johnson's proof is based on a law of physics.



Gardens of Corfu
Rachel Weaving, illus. by Marianne Majerus. Impress Publishing. \$65 hardcover (256p), ISBN 978-1-9997825-1-1
Amazon

This first-ever book on the gardens of Corfu, greenest of the Greek islands, spans the range from romantic old estates to contemporary works by international designers.

God's Unreasonable Reasoning: What God Is Up to When Things in Life



Don't Make Sense
Preston Williams II. iUniverse. \$13.99 paper (238p), ISBN 978-1-5320-5811-0; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-5320-5810-3
Amazon, BN.com

A spiritual guidebook that can help you understand God's reasoning in life's many transitions.

A Guide for Writing Teachers: How to Build Effective Writing Communities in College



LaRonce M. Hendricks. AuthorHouse. \$10.99 paper (70p), ISBN 978-1-5246-9739-6; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-5246-9738-9
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A helpful tool for teachers, exposing educational perspectives on how negative predispositions prevent a student from performing at high levels.

A History of the Apocalypse (second ed.)

Catalin Negru. Catalin Negru. \$25 paper (637p), ISBN 978-1-387-91116-5; \$2.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-387-91839-3
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Every generation thinks that its problems are the most important ever. Thus, people



always see signs in their times, and the end of the world is constantly a fresh subject.



Inside Hollywood

Marsha Ross.
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Amazon
A book of thoughts and
art about love, life, and
success in the movie capital of the world.



It's All in the Name

Keith Brovald. Xlibris.
\$15.99 paper (110p),
ISBN 978-1-5434-4602-
9; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN
978-1-5434-4603-6
Amazon

This book contains a
categorized list of possible names that
have other meanings (e.g., Luke Warm,
Justin Tyme, Jim Nasium).

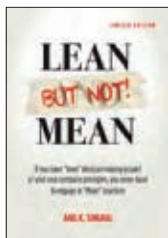
Kick-Ass Kinda Girl: A Memoir of Life,



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Kathi Koll. Ward
Publishing. \$16 paper
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Koll unveils an unex-
pected life of joy, adventure, and great
sadness with honesty and humor as she
navigates the realities of life as a full-
time caregiver.



Lean but Not Mean

Anil K. Singhal. Anil K.
Singhal. \$20 hardcover
(200p), ISBN 978-1-
73244-750-9
Amazon
Singhal takes a con-
trarian's view to the

question of how to run a successful cor-
poration by prescribing his "lean but not
mean" approach.

Looking to the Stars from Old Algiers and Other Long Stories Short



Jan Risher. Sans Souci
Books. \$9.99 e-book,
ISBN 978-1-946160-33-1
Janrisher.com, Amazon,
BN.com

This book is Risher's
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which creates a narrative
of her aim to build her family and commu-
nity, and weave the stories and lessons
from the past into the present.



"Love Letters": Deep Affection; Fondness

Claudia Rhodes. Xlibris.
\$19.99 paper (108p),
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8; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN
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Amazon

Telling your truth will free you of any
complications in life. All parents should
write their own stories for their children.

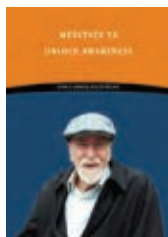
M.A.R.E.S.: Mature, Attractive, Respectable, Even-Tempered, Single, Professional Ladies over Forty



Sherry Lynne. iUniverse.
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Amazon, BN.com, iUniverse

Do women over 40
who pursue younger
men want to be called
cougars? For those who
aspire to a higher level of femininity and
professionalism, Lynne has coined the
acronym MARES for confident, attractive,
fun-loving, and financially secure ladies
who magnetize a man searching for
those qualities.

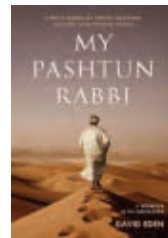
Meditate to Unlock Awareness



Edna E. Craven. Toplink
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Craven argues that
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My Pashtun Rabbi: A Jew's Search for Truth, Meaning, and Hope in the Muslim World



David Eden. BookBaby.
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Amazon, BookBaby
Eden chronicles his
time as the "journal-

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University during the 2008–2009 school
year, as the world's economy collapsed
and war erupted in Gaza.

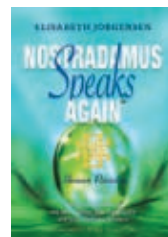


My Soul Is Filled with Joy: A Holocaust Story

Karen I. Treiger. Stare
Lipki Press. \$14.99 paper
(315p), ISBN 978-0-692-
11579-4
Amazon

This is a tale of
Holocaust survivors Sam and Esther
Goldberg, and of the author as she tells of
her writing journey the past three years.

Nostradamus Speaks Again:



Heaven Paradise

Elisabeth Jörgensen.
Balboa Press. \$2.85
paper (160p), ISBN 978-
1-4525-1489-5
Amazon

An exploration of human
nature as well as the
complicated times we are now approaching.

Notes from the Trenches: A Musician's Journey Through World War I



Gary H. Foster. Outskirts
Press. \$24.95 paper
(306p), ISBN 978-1-
4787-9274-1
Amazon

Foster retraces his
grandfather's footsteps
from enlistment in the

PW SELECT LISTINGS

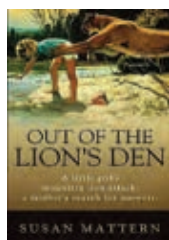
booklife

National Guard to the trench battles in France during WWI to his joyful homecoming.

Operation Wappen: A War that Never Was

Robert K. Maddock Jr. Xlibris. \$41.99 paper (84p), ISBN 978-1-5434-6084-1; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-5434-6085-8
Amazon
The story of a CIA-MI6 Middle East 1957

military adventure to overthrow the Syrian government and a return of knights to the battlefield.

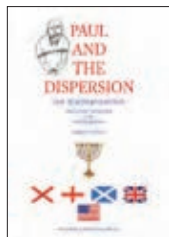


Out of the Lion's Den

Susan Mattern.
CreateSpace. \$7.99 e-book, ASIN B01LDTR6K1
Amazon
The true story of five-year-old Laura Small's attack by a mountain

lion in a California park, with family, cover-ups, legal battles, and beliefs pushed to the brink.

Paul and the Dispersion: The Teacher's Edition



Richard J. Willoughby Sr.
iUniverse. \$33.99 paper (162p), ISBN 978-1-5320-1239-6; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-5320-1240-2
Amazon

This book equips teachers to explore and explain Paul's mission to the Jews of the Diaspora, revealing the scope of this often-overlooked aspect of his wide-ranging apostolic work.

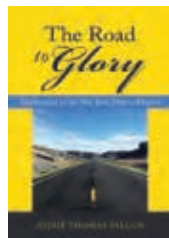
Pulpit Friction: Reawakening the Church's Voice in a Political Wilderness



Ken Kinton. WestBow Press. \$13.95 paper (156p), ISBN 978-1-973641-56-8
Amazon, BN.com, Ingram
Kinton examines the challenges facing the church in a politically

hostile world.

The Road to Glory: Meditations on the Way from Here to Heaven



Thomas Dillon. WestBow Press. \$10.99 paper (166p), ISBN 978-1-973623-65-6; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-973623-64-9
Amazon
Theologian and lawyer

Dillon explores signs, illustrations, and symbols in Scripture that will guide us on the right road on the way from here to heaven.

Spirit and Soul: Odyssey of a Black Man in America



Theodore Kirkland. Xlibris. \$23.99 paper (522p), ISBN 978-1-4691-8625-2; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-4691-8627-6
Amazon

In this autobiography, Kirkland offers critical insight and politically cognizant commentary on the past, future, and real-time reality of race relations in America.

Stupid Cupid: A Survivor's Guide to



Online Dating

Alison O'Donnell.
Stillwater River Publications. \$20 paper (297p), ISBN 978-1-946300-25-6
Author alisonodonnell.com, Amazon, BN.com

Chronicling 100 horrific dates, the author gives online dating advice for men and women. Written in short snippets, it's an easy read that's as fun as it is practical.

TBC30: 6 Steps to a Stronger,



Healthier You

Michael Wood. Wicked Whale Publisher. \$14.95 paper (244p), ISBN 978-1-73219-250-8
Amazon, Apple iBooks, BN.com
The TBC30 plan offers

a game plan that utilizes the same science-based exercise and diet approach that has worked for Wood's clients for more than 30 years.



Unwelcome Opportunity: Overcoming Life's Greatest Challenges

Richard V. Battle. Outskirts Press. \$14.95 paper (162p), ISBN 978-1-977201-64-5
Amazon, BN.com

Battle faced multiple tests in a short period of time and shares how he, with God's daily provision, overcame them.

What Endures: An Amerasian's Lifelong



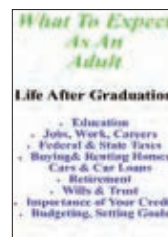
Struggle During and After the Vietnam War

John Vo. Xlibris. \$15.99 paper (76p), ISBN 978-1-5434-8229-4; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-5434-8230-0
Amazon

Vo came to America in 1987 as a refugee from war-ravaged Vietnam. This is his lifelong story of hope and despair, triumph and defeat.

What to Expect as an Adult

Linda Tengan Wright. Linda Sue Tengan Wright.



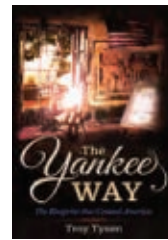
\$12.95 e-book, ISBN 978-0-578-40935-1
Amazon

Wright discusses the importance of credit, finances, education, renting a home, buying a car, and much more.

The Yankee Way:

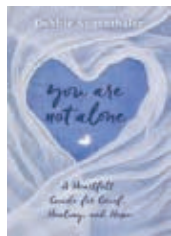
The Blueprint that Created America

Troy Tyson. Courant Publishing. \$14.95 paper (266p), ISBN 978-1-73278-120-7



Theyankeeway.com, Amazon, BN.com
How did America become great? This book proposes that America's unparalleled

success stems from the traits of a small, peculiar ethnic group from New England known as the Yankees.



**You Are Not Alone:
A Heartfelt Guide
to Grief, Healing,
and Hope**

Debbie Augenthaler.
Everystep Publishing.
\$14.99 paper (268p),
ISBN 978-1-73202-

330-7; \$13.80 audio, ASIN B07GJQWQDZ
Debbieaugenthaler.com, Amazon, BN.com
Augenthaler, a licensed mental health
counselor, combines her personal story of
devastating loss with practical insights and
simple suggestions for healing and hope.

Children's/YA

The Adventures of Camellia N.:



The Rainforest

Debra L. Wideroe, illus. by
Daniela Frongia. Notable
Kids. \$16.95 hardcover
(40p), ISBN 978-0-

9970851-4-3

Amazon, BN.com, Booktopia

Journey with pint-size explorer Camellia
N. as she discovers why the rain forest is
one of the most important and lush
habitats on planet Earth.

The Adventures of Katarina Rose

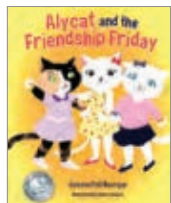
S.G. Johnson. Xlibris. \$21.99 paper (32p),
ISBN 978-1-4836-



3584-2

Amazon

A kitty cat would rather
go on adventures than
sleep all day.



**Alycat and the
Friendship Friday**

Alysson Foti Bourque,
illus. by Chiara Civati.
Mascot Books. \$14.95
hardcover (38p), ISBN
978-1-68401-903-8

Amazon, BN.com, Books-a-Million, Powell's
When a new student joins the class,
someone feels left out. Can Alycat use
her creativity and imagination to help

everyone feel included?

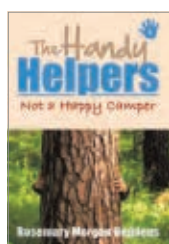


Carol and Santa

Karen O. Cotton. Karen O.
Cotton. \$7.99 paper
(89p), ISBN 978-0-578-
40033-4
Amazon, BN.com
Carol Bell, an eight-
year-old cowgirl who

keeps getting blamed for trouble, didn't
believe Santa delivered coal to naughty
kids. She learns it's not Santa, but she
knows who does.

The Handy Helpers: Not a Happy



Camper

Rosemary Morgan
Heddens. Xlibris. \$19.99
paper (214p), ISBN 978-
1-5434-5598-4; \$3.99
e-book, ISBN 978-1-
5434-5597-7
Amazon

Exciting adventures await the Handy
Helpers and Beth Anne, who learn the
value of helping each other along the way.

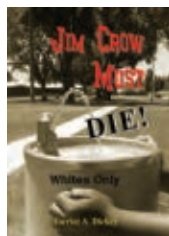
How Jack Got Flat

Susan Donohue Colby. Mill City Press. \$25.99
hardcover (40p), ISBN 978-1-5456-3986-3;



\$15.49 paper (p), ISBN
978-1-5456-3490-5
Amazon, BN.com
A humorous story
about a cat whose life

is forever changed, and how he adapts
to this change and discovers new and
exciting adventures from it.



Jim Crow Must Die!

Harriet A. Dickey.
CreateSpace. \$7.99
paper (158p), ISBN 978-
1-4783-5779-7
Amazon
It's the summer of

1966, and 10-year-old
junior militant and Chicago native Hannah
Jordan is making her annual trip to
Mississippi. Her grandparents' town is rife
with segregation that she is unfamiliar with,
so she decides something must be done.

K My Name Is Kendra

Kamichi Jackson. Kindle Direct. \$9.95 paper
(178p), ISBN 978-1-5410-3303-0



Amazon

Fifteen-year-old
Kendra's life begins to
spiral with the visit of a
celebrity uncle, who
sets his sights on her
and the return of the
runaway sister deter-

mined to save her.

Outside My Bedroom Walls

Nona Ransom, illus. by Windel Eborlas. Xlibris.
\$17.99 paper (38p), ISBN 978-1-5434-



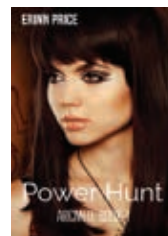
4130-7; \$3.99 e-book,
ISBN 978-1-5434-

4131-4

Amazon

Carina wants to go
somewhere, anywhere
over the summer. With
her aunt Maria's help, Carina discovers a
world to explore, right outside her bed-
room walls.

Power Hunt (ArcMed, Book 1) (ArcOn 3)

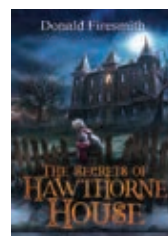


Erinn Price. NLSA. \$3.99
e-book, ASIN
B07F36VVML

Amazon

They thought that, as
a scientist, Morgan
Dumont would be an
easy target, but they

were wrong. Together with Mathew, a man
with some extraordinary abilities, she races
to get to the ancient relics of power first.



**The Secrets of
Hawthorne House**

Donald Firesmith. Mage
Press. 99¢ e-book,
ASIN B07GV2F814
Amazon, Apple iBooks,
BN.com, Indigo, Kobo
Matt's life changes

forever when a family of witches moves
into the dilapidated Victorian mansion
next door. A tale of unlikely friendship
and the clash of two very different cul-
tures.

Fiction

Beach Body Boogie

Timothy Fagan. Fireclay, \$14.99 trade paper (384p) ISBN 978-1-7324596-0-1

Carl Hiaasen fans will enjoy Fagan's tongue-in-cheek first novel, a series launch set on Cape Cod. Three years after Pepper Ryan was kicked off the New Albion, Mass., police force following a botched drug stakeout, he receives a second chance. Pepper's return to duty coincides with the discovery of a bizarre crime—beachcombers find the body of Arnold Keser buried in the sand, under a tarp. Keser was shot and then steamed to death in a clambake, with a red starfish left on the corpse. The Secret Service reveals to the New Albion PD that the dead man was one of theirs, assigned to do advance security work before President Wayne Garby's vacation in the vicinity—and that they're taking seriously a recently received death threat to POTUS, which features a drawing in red of a starfish and signed "R.I.P. Garby. U took my candy!" Pepper, who ends up as the liaison to the feds, races frantically to prevent the assassination. Fagan manages the impressive feat of balancing suspense and humor.

Broken Places

Roland Martin. iUniverse, \$18.95 trade paper (300p) ISBN 978-0-595-52961-2

Martin's intense and profound novel is about battles that are waged with society, authority, the self, and others. Three young African-American men are assigned to share a dorm room as college freshmen at Pittsburgh City University, but their differences are daunting. Shawn Collins, oversexed and egotistic, is a rising basketball star showered with elaborate recruiting gifts (including a BMW). Robert Robinson, at school on an academic scholarship, is gay, but he's repressed by guilt and his religious faith, and he's always braced for harassment. Jamal Lewis also won an academic scholarship; he maturely and wisely tries to serve as a bridge between his two roommates, befriending Robert and tutoring Shawn. Their lives are changed by the semester they spend together, with Shawn's coach and ex-girlfriend manipulating him, Robert's longings causing him fear and confusion,

and Jamal's ethics pushing him toward a dangerous, climactic confrontation. The truths here are poignant, and the realities of racism, homophobia, and the exploitation of young athletes are scrutinized by an insightful author who leaves readers with the hopeful message that "You become strongest in your broken places."

Catherine Lescault

Walter Idlewild. Fårö, \$15.99 trade paper (334p) ISBN 978-0-9986226-0-6

Idlewild's novel is a fantastic exploration of the creative process and the horror of creation, heavily rooted in Honoré de Balzac's "The Unknown Masterpiece." Balzac's characters move through the novel as spirits and paintings, each a different incarnation in a mirrored world. In the opening epistolaries, Mary Frenhofer hopes that the "rarified air" of an inherited country home will help her husband recover from depression and finish his masterpiece, a book years in the making; she doesn't know that the house is marred by a torturous history of artists going mad and muses dying within. "The house of fiction has many rooms," Dr. Frenhofer observes. "But in this house a room is missing." The novel takes a sharp turn into the unreal when Dr. Frenhofer is proven to be right; a portrait of the dead artist Porbus is found in a hidden room, and from it he walks like a specter. In a mirror universe, Porbus's muse Gillette is the ingénue painter seeking to perfect her masterpiece, and Mary's letters are found documents. Gillette is Pygmalion, and Porbus is entirely her creation. Idlewild's novel becomes a palimpsest in itself; pieces of Balzac's original narrative are obscured and repurposed, until the novel itself imitates Balzac's fictional painting of Catherine Lescault. Idlewild's exploration of the nature of art is a bewildering, beautiful novel full of intriguing characters.

★ The Cost of Hope

G.S. Carr. Gabrielle O. Brown, \$3.99 e-book (194p) ISBN 978-1-71955-223-3

Carr (*Divorce Wars*) delivers a poignant message about the meaning of freedom in the first Cost of Love historical. Carr wastes no time in vividly setting up Soleil's dramatic and hard-hitting plight as a former slave in 1860s Alabama. After defending

herself against a vicious attack by her enslaver, 22-year-old Soleil flees with her five-year-old daughter, Hope. They are rescued by 25-year-old Alex Cummings, a powerful white plantation owner who recognizes the confused woman as Soleil Dufor, his former love interest, who mysteriously disappeared six years earlier. Soleil is a formidable and sympathetic protagonist whose role as a mother makes her both resilient and vulnerable to those threatening their freedom. Even as Soleil's connections to wealth and her history with Alex are gradually revealed, the tension remains high as Soleil battles prejudice against former slaves and loopholes in emancipation. The message about freedom not always being simple is significant and well conveyed without being preachy or overstated. French-speaking readers may be distracted by inaccuracies in Soleil's use of the French language, but the writing is otherwise smooth. This well-told historical romance is intense and powerful.

Gaia Twist

Doug Walker. CreateSpace, \$15.99 trade paper (392p) ISBN 978-1-71918-732-9

A mysterious toxin contaminating the food supply threatens Earth in 2816 in this mixed debut novel from physicist Walker, whose storytelling isn't as innovative as his scientific concepts. Southwest Saskatchewan field monitor Galen Sjøfred, a stereotypical former hero fallen from grace, is alerted to the crisis when he discovers dead animals littering the soybean fields he oversees. The totalitarian Earth Authority's Minister of Organic Resources is desperate to cover up the existence of Toxin X and orders the immediate arrest of Galen and his nieces, Kessa and Marta Dahlstrom, who are visiting from the planet New Gaia. Pilots Jet Castilian and Stoke Omroni join the cast of wooden characters when an inexplicably rash decision forces them to help the Dahlstrom sisters evade the government pursuit. Walker's solid scientific concepts paint a believable vision of Earth's future, but the combination of overly familiar plot tropes with two-dimensional characters detracts from the stimulating premise and thematic exploration of isolationism vs. community.

Goodbye, Magnolia

Krista Noorman. CreateSpace, \$10.99 trade paper (250p) ISBN 978-1-5024-7790-3

This appealing Christian romance from Noorman (*Bittersweet*) explores how rash judgments can stand in the way of true love. Rival wedding photographers Maggie James and Simon Walker are both talented, driven, and determined, and love weddings as expressions of the leap of faith. But Simon also feels that Maggie misjudged him when they briefly dated over 10 years ago, and he's never gotten over her. However, although they have a clear chemistry when they run into each other preparing for weddings, Maggie allows Simon to charm her only briefly before repeatedly shutting him down. The repetition of this cycle becomes tedious as it plays out from one wedding to the next. After one too many rejections—for both Simon and the reader—Simon finally decides he needs to give up. But will his faith in the destiny he believes in allow him to move on? Although the book is heavy on dialogue and light on character development, Norman's message of faith and perseverance will find an audience with readers of inspirational romance.

Heartbreak at Roosevelt Ranch

Elise Faber. Elise Faber, \$2.99 e-book (250p) ASIN B07BKB77H7

Faber continues her Roosevelt Ranch series (*Disaster at Roosevelt Ranch*) with this uneven contemporary tale about a food blogger and a cop whose marriage appears to be hitting the rocks. Melissa is content with her life as a wife and mother in Darlington, Utah, until she finds a secret cellphone with messages that imply her husband, Rob, is having an affair with a mysterious woman named Celeste. As if that's not enough, when an unexpected dinner party at her sister's turns into a chance for Melissa to have her own cable cooking show, she's thrilled—but her husband isn't, further driving a wedge between the two and making divorce seem likely. Faber's competent characterization (particularly of Melissa and her pregnant sister, Kelly, the heroine of the first book) pulls the reader into the story, a heartbreaking view into a marriage devolving—so when Faber takes an almost cartoonishly soap opera-like series of detours late in the book,

readers may feel misled and annoyed. Melissa's villainous mother and an unexpected relative are irredeemable, making the reader wish for their demises as soon as possible, and Faber's late, sharp veer into thriller territory just doesn't ring true.

★ Hero Forged: Ethereal Earth, Book 1

Josh Erikson. Josh Erikson, \$3.99 e-book (346p) ASIN B07CZ51BXD

Debut author Erikson blazes onto the urban fantasy scene with a cornucopia of deceptively simple worldbuilding and meticulously plotted storytelling. Gabe is a professional con man in dire need of money to ensure his ill father's continuing care. When the perfect way to earn some quick cash appears, Gabe jumps on the opportunity, only to learn—the hard way—that nothing good comes cheap: he and several others are set up to be consumed by powerful unearthly beings called Umbras, and after the ritual is botched, Gabe ends up with one of them in his head. Suddenly Gabe's narrow view of the world is exponentially expanded, and he's forced to reevaluate his entire concept of self while dealing with the Umbras and trying to stop the ones who are out to destroy humankind. This is an intricate mystery laced with humor and lore. Precise characterization, and an equal focus on personal evolution and the everyday fantastic, lend the novel a satisfying gravitas. Fans of Jim Butcher and Craig Schaefer will gobble up this trilogy launch and eagerly await more.

Hostile Takeover: Vale Investigation, Book 1

Cristelle Comby. Cristelle Comby, \$3.99 e-book (355p) ASIN B07D2MWFN7

This brisk paranormal noir innovatively combines gods and gentrification, but stale genre artifacts leave a bad aftertaste. In an alternate version of the present-day U.S., private eye Bellamy Vale works for Lady McDeath—death incarnated as a classic femme fatale—whose quick-healing powers he accesses in exchange for fealty. She sends him to hunt a murderous part-beast berserker through Cold City. When the berserker's seemingly random maulings unfold into an otherworld-spanning plot rooted in real estate, gentrification, and the worship

of old gods, only Vale, demigod hacker Zian, and ambitious Texan journalist Candice Kennedy can stop it. Comby (*Blind Chess*) ably handles dynamic action, and Cold City's post–Great Recession instability fits detective noir well. However, close adherence to 1930s tropes feels dated at best, retrograde at worst: Vale's Chanderlesque banter includes a dash of glaring misogyny, with every adult woman sexualized, labeled “bitch,” or both. Casual jokes about Asians eating bugs and a villain's bad English only increase the discomfort. These dusty stereotypes undermine even the most jaded reader's enjoyment of an otherwise fine magical homage to hardboiled crime fiction.

The Italian Couple

J.R. Rogers. J.R. Rogers, \$4.99 e-book (434p) ASIN B07C4XW4MY

This suspenseful combination romance and espionage thriller centers on a married couple in despair in Fascist Italy under Benito Mussolini's rule. In 1938, in the city of Asmara, known as Little Rome in the Italian Eritrea colony of East Africa, Col. Francesco Ferrazza, a cagey Italian military information officer, is tasked with Operation Red Lion, a sabotage operation ordered by Mussolini. Through manipulation and enticements, the colonel begins to groom local mechanic and novice race car driver Mario Caparrotti to carry out the destruction; one of the colonel's schemes includes Mario becoming the lover of the colonel's wife, British-born Emilia, who reluctantly goes along with the ruse. The sabotage scheme begins unraveling when Mario demands more money after becoming involved in the colonel's cover-up of a murder, and Emilia begins an affair with Gyles Aiscroft, a British freelance foreign correspondent and part-time intelligence agent working for her father. The novel's pacing is skillful and precise, leading ultimately to an unforeseen and terrifically satisfying ending. Rogers's depiction of Asmara—its strategic significance, architecture, and how it was modeled after a typical Italian city, even incorporating a car race with Mario as a driver in the novel's introduction—is both a richly visual impression of Rome and a dark reminder of Mussolini's rule.

Last Call

Libby Kirsch. Sunnyside, \$12.99 trade paper (250p) ISBN 978-0-9969350-8-1

Janet Black, the heroine of this appealing series launch from Kirsch (the Stella Reynolds series), is proud of the Knoxville, Tenn., bar she owns. She's determined to be a level-headed and responsive boss to her rag-tag group of employees—and a warm face to her eccentric patrons. But circumstances take a sinister turn when Janet discovers a body—that of a bar regular, Ike Freeman—behind the Dumpster of her bar. Amid the chaos of swarming cops and confused regulars, Ike's daughter plants roots at the bar, refusing to budge until the police solve the crime. Janet's own sleuthing leads her to uncover the victim's hidden past and to become a thorn in the side of law enforcement, while a second murder causes her to doubt even those closest to her. Tension rarely rises above a slow simmer, but the mystery reveals unexpected entanglements and stranger motivations. Readers may not gain a deep sense of Janet's interiority, but she's a strong-willed, good-hearted woman who isn't afraid to get her hands dirty.

May Day

R.R. Born. R.R. Born, \$13 trade paper (262p) ISBN 978-1-73243-370-0

Although uneven in its delivery, Born's debut novel introduces readers to a fascinating world of ancient magic and sets up a number of intriguing arcs for the proposed series to come. Ari Mason was born with highly destructive magic powers that her heartless mother manipulated ruthlessly. Having fled her coven, Ari is now a bartender and tarot card reader. She's determined to use her powers to help others, including her ghost companion Remy and her friend Leise, who has just received an unusual bequest. She may even have found love for herself. When a killer with supernatural powers begins targeting Houston's witches and humans alike, Ari resolves to take action—until she realizes the killer is much closer to her than she ever imagined. The premise of this story is appealing, reminiscent of Adrian Phoenix's Hoodoo series, but too little meaningful exposition and too much extraneous detail keep this story from exploring anything deeper than the superficial and generally predictable.

★ On the Edge of Daylight:**A Novel of the Titanic**

Giselle Beaumont. Trek, \$11.99 trade paper (474p) ISBN 978-1-980593-22-5

In this beautifully crafted historical romance about the journey and eventual sinking of the *Titanic*, debut author Beaumont weaves facts with fiction to create a transcendent tale. The author modestly points out that the novel is not a 100% accurate portrayal of the tragedy, but it's close enough that readers will feel as if they have experienced the disaster personally. When feisty Seventh Officer Esther Bailey and her commanding officer, Will Murdoch, meet, cutting wit ensues—and the two quickly recognize their sparring as enticing foreplay. Rules prohibit a romance until the ship docks in New York, leaving simmering, suppressed sexual chemistry woven throughout the story. When the *Titanic* meets its date with destiny, Esther and Will realize that not everyone gets a tomorrow—and that their roles must give them the courage to help others. Vivid descriptions bring the reader onto the doomed ship as characters shrink in terror from the inevitable, pray for rescue, and grieve for the lost. Beaumont heartbreakingly chronicles survivor's guilt wrapped in a history lesson, and ably portrays the heroism and honor of the men and women of the sea. This expertly characterized and tautly plotted story is an extremely impressive debut.

Pathogen Protocol

Darren D. Beyer. Darren D. Beyer, \$13.99 trade paper (579p) ISBN 978-0-9973366-1-0

Like ripples in a pond, this frenetic space opera sequel to *Casimir Bridge* moves in bigger and bigger circles outward from the splashy events detailed in the opening volume. Jans Mikel and the other leaders of Applied Interstellar Corp., reeling from the invasion of their extrasolar headquarters, try to keep their source of the wormhole-generating hyperium hidden while security chief Grae Raymus organizes the resistance. Rival corporate power Tech Standard and its head operative, Erik Hallerson, force the issue by seizing the remaining known hyperium supplies, bringing the three Earth superpowers into their court. Mikel's agent, Mandi Nkosi, makes a desperate attempt to contact a rogue AIC officer who's now

leading an Outer Sphere terrorist group. Beyer gives the reader little time to soak up atmosphere or to puzzle out the mysteries of his universe (such as the presence of telepathic alien AIs that boost human intelligence), but the fast pacing, occasional humor, and clear split between the good guys and bad guys push a lot of questions out of the way as the action pulls the reader forward.

Piercing Maybe

Dan Cray. Third Quandary, \$16 trade paper (340p) ISBN 978-1-940317-07-6

This science fiction thriller tantalizes with a bold, intriguing, and original premise, touching on themes of human potential and the ethics of eugenics, but falls apart due to a lack of subtlety and plausibility. Andra Barger's is the only human woman entrusted by the secret Cinüe race to help execute their 180,000-year-old diminishing program, by which every human child's godlike capacities are eliminated by the stealthy placement of a gel on the mother's palm at conception. Andra struggles with balancing her general opposition to this program, and her personal desire for an unaltered child, with politics that affect the lives of her loved ones. These concerns are amplified when, to her surprise, she is tapped to vote on the semicentennial Council's reapproving the program. Cray (*Mother Tongue*) fails to reconcile the cloak-and-dagger nature of the diminishing process with a near-perfect success rate over millennia, and though Cinüe-created tools and environments are often evocatively described, an unsatisfying explanation of "arcane tech" is relied on for almost everything. Cray lets what could have been a thought-provoking story degenerate into a humans vs. others power fantasy.

★ A Queen from the North

Erin McRae and Racheline Maltese. Avian30, \$27.99 (408p) ISBN 978-1-946192-07-3

The splendid first in the Royal Roses series introduces an alternate present-day U.K. in which the Wars of the Roses never ended and a political marriage between Prince Arthur, the widowed Lancaster Prince of Wales, and Lady Amelia Brockett, the radical daughter of a Yorkish earl, is the only thing that might finally unite the

kingdom. Amelia, a grad student studying environmental science, never planned on becoming a princess, but when Arthur proposes their union as a mutually beneficial political arrangement soon after their first meeting, she can't deny her people the chance to finally have a York on the throne. Against her better judgement, she grows closer with the charismatic prince. Faced with relentless press coverage, a divided, skeptical populace, and an ever-changing political climate, Amelia struggles to keep track of what in their relationship is real and what is just for show. Rich, diverse world-building sets this story of contemporary royalty apart. McRae and Maltese (the Love in Los Angeles series) have created a perfect cocktail of political intrigue and slow-burn romance.

The Silver Horn Echoes: A Song of Roland

Michael Eging and Steve Arnold. iUniverse, \$29.95 (334p) ISBN 978-1-5320-2021-6

In this thrilling medieval swashbuckler, Eging and Arnold reimagine the adventure, treachery, and epic battles of the Franks in 801 CE through Roland, knight of Breton March and King Charles's esteemed combat hero. Roland is an ambitious young warrior who finds himself only posted to garrison duty when King Charles leaves to battle the Saxons. When an envoy arrives with news of another foreign aggressor, Roland leaves to inform the king of the news. He joins the Saxon assault, becoming the king's bravest, most skilled fighter, and earns the title "champion." Meanwhile, Roland uncovers a plot to harm the king, and suspects his stepfather, Ganelon, is its instigator; Roland believes Ganelon also killed his father, William. The Franks soon find themselves battling on two fronts. There are gory battles throughout that will resonate with combat and history enthusiasts, but may be too graphic for some readers. Those closest to Roland—his wife, Aude; friend Oliver; and mother, Gisela—elevate a complex, powerful character whose decency can seem at odds with his brutality during battle. This tale of military aggression, family betrayal, and knightly valor ably reimagines the legend of Roland and his indomitable fighting spirit.

★ Stolen: A Kieran Yeats Mystery

Linda J. Wright. Cat's Paw, \$16.95 trade paper (240p) ISBN 978-1-7323593-0-7

Set in Victoria, British Columbia, this superb series kickoff from Wright (the Caitlin Reece mysteries, as Lauren Wright Douglas) introduces Kieran Yates, a former Crown Counsel, who has left practicing law to work as an investigator of crime related to animals. She's drawn into a complex case after Jen, her 13-year-old goddaughter, confesses that 11 Bengal kittens have mysteriously disappeared from the cattery where Jen was hired to keep watch. Though Jen insists that all the doors were locked and the alarms set, someone managed to enter and abscond with the valuable felines. From what Jen says, Kieran gets the sense that the crime was an inside job. The inquiry broadens after Kieran learns that others in the area have also had their pets stolen. Kieran uses both high tech (she has a friend hack into the alarm system at the residence housing the cattery) and old-fashioned shoe leather to crack the case. Wright, who has been involved in animal advocacy for 30 years, combines her passionate commitment to animal rights with a riveting whodunit that's not dependent on murder to sustain interest.

A Strange Companion

Lisa Manterfield. Steel Rose, \$5.99 e-book (342p) ASIN B06XB85BD8

Manterfield's bittersweet debut follows a young woman's attempt to recover from overwhelming loss. Seventeen-year-old Kat Richardson thought she and her boyfriend, Gabe, would marry and spend their lives together. But those plans are dashed when Gabe dies in a rock climbing accident. Two years later, Kat has been having trouble moving on—until she meets handsome fellow university student Owen, whose playful and earnest personality has started to heal Kat's broken heart. But their budding relationship is interrupted when she returns home to meet her new niece, Mai, who's been adopted by her brother and his husband. There, Kat is confronted with the possibility that Gabe has been reincarnated as Mai. Manterfield presents the idea of reincarnation with just the right balance of skepticism and hope as Kat questions both her mind and feelings while acknowledging

that "The problem with grief was that it didn't come with a user manual." This thoughtful story about learning how to live after loved ones are gone will captivate readers.

Terminal

John Leifer. Earhart, \$12.99 trade paper (366p) ISBN 978-0-9995655-2-0

Leifer (*The Myths of Modern Medicine*) makes his fiction debut with this suspenseful and alarming kickoff to a trilogy. Cmdr. John Hart has an impressive resume. A former Navy Seal with degrees in medicine and nuclear engineering, he officially works with the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, and is part of the counterterrorism team that addresses the threat of bioweapons. He faces his greatest challenge when Ibrahim Almasi al-Bakr, the founder of the United Islamic State, sets a diabolical plan in motion to devastate the U.S., making use of a "virus of unimaginable destructive power." Al-Bakr intends to target America's four busiest air terminals with the highly contagious disease, which was developed as part of a covert Soviet biowarfare program. Hart's desperate efforts to avert disaster are aided by his colleague and former lover, Elizabeth Wilkins, a senior scientist with the Centers for Disease Control. While the overall plotline isn't new, Leifer, who has served on a presidential panel headed by former national security adviser Brent Scowcroft, makes the details plausible.

Nonfiction

God's Grand Design for Health

James Darnell. WestBow, \$13.95 trade paper (168p) ISBN 978-1-5127-8641-5

Darnell, a chiropractor and holistic counselor, introduces his system of spiritual and physical health in this clear and helpful book. Taking readers beyond symptoms and into the intricate world of the symbiotic relationships between bodies and their surrounding environments, Darnell explores how diet, the environment, and the delicate balance of pH in the body may affect all aspects of health. In his opening chapters he uses many charts and lists to explain the increasingly poor health of U.S. citizens. He then dives into his holistic approach, which

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Reviews

Fiction

The River

Peter Heller. Knopf, \$25.95 (272p) ISBN 978-0-525-52187-7

Heller (*Celine*) explores human relationships buffeted by outside forces in his suspenseful latest. The central friendship is between two young men, Wynn and Jack, students who have taken a leave of absence from Dartmouth to explore the Canadian wilderness. Their late summer canoe trip, however, finds them pursued by two dangerous natural foes—a rapidly advancing wildfire and the equally swift approach of freezing temperatures. Their trip is further complicated when the two men's intervention in a domestic drama results in the addition of a deeply traumatized woman, Maia, to their traveling party. Short on supplies, racing against disaster toward civilization, Jack and Wynn's loyalties to one another are repeatedly strained. Jack and Wynn—who are both effortlessly erudite while also seemingly adept at virtually every skill of the outdoorsman—may be too well-rounded to be entirely believable. Their motivations are convincing, however, especially when nature's violence rekindles Jack's memories of his mother's accidental death years earlier. Maia, conversely, can at times feel more like a plot device than like a woman with an inherently dramatic story of her own. Nevertheless, with its evocative descriptions of nature's splendor and brutality, Heller's novel beautifully depicts the powers that can drive humans apart—and those that compel them to return repeatedly to one another. (*Mar.*)

The Spirit of Science Fiction

Roberto Bolaño, trans. from the Spanish by Natasha Wimmer. Penguin Press, \$24 (208p) ISBN 978-0-7352-2285-4

This striking, meandering novel from Bolaño (2666), written toward the beginning of his career, follows the coming-of-age of two young writers in Mexico City. Aspiring writers Jan and Remo get an apartment together. Jan spends his days



Roberto Bolaño's The Spirit of Science Fiction is a dreamy, meandering novel about two writers trying to find their voices (reviewed on this page).

holed up in the apartment, reading books and penning letters to sci-fi authors he admires, such as Ursula K. Le Guin and Fritz Leiber. Jan's solitude is contrasted by Remo's social jaunts around the city: he joins a poetry workshop, falls in love with a young woman named Laura, and rides a motorcycle. Remo's involvement in the city's literary scene exposes the reader to a number of digressive stories (one particularly memorable aside features Georges Perec unwittingly defusing a duel between poets Isidore Isou and André Vernier in Paris). Meanwhile, the reader also sees Jan's searching letters, scattered throughout: "Oh, Ursula, it's actually a relief to send out messages and have all the time in the world," he writes. Though more a collection of scenes and impressions and thinner than his other novels, this is an intriguing and dreamy portrait of two writers taking different paths in their pursuit of their love of literature, hoping to discover their voices. (*Feb.*)

More Than Words

Jill Santopolo. Putnam, \$25 (352p) ISBN 978-0-7352-1830-7

Santopolo follows 2017's *The Light We Lost* with a heartfelt story about life, love, and taking chances in the aftermath of loss. Thirty-something hotel heiress Nina Gregory loves her job as speechwriter for New York mayoral candidate Rafael O'Connor-Ruiz, and she loves her boyfriend and lifelong best friend, Tim Calder. But she adores her father, Joseph, and as cancer weakens the once-vibrant man, Nina

treasures the time they have left. When Joseph finally succumbs to his illness, the devastated Nina must pick up the pieces and take the reins of the Gregory Corporation. Nina soon discovers that her father, who revered the Gregory legacy and lived life in the spotlight, was hiding secrets about his company and her mother, who died when Nina was a child. A potent—and mutual—attraction to Rafael complicates things further. Nina's self-discovery is bolstered by the strong women in her life, and her struggle to accept her larger than life father as a flawed man will resonate with readers. This is a charming and sexy crowd-pleaser. (*Feb.*)

The Sisters Hemingway

Annie England Noblin. Morrow, \$15.99 trade paper (384p) ISBN 978-0-06-267451-7

Noblin (*Just Fine with Caroline*) returns to Cold River, Mo., in this sweet tale of coming home after life goes awry in the big city. The three Hemingway sisters all head home for the funeral of their last living relative, Aunt Bee, with each leading very different lives from the last time they were in Cold River. Hadley is the wife of a senator, Pfeiffer works as a book editor in New York City, and Martha is a famous Nashville country singer fresh (and secretly) out of rehab. After the deaths of their mother and sister in a tornado, the sisters all left Cold River as soon as they came of age, each expecting to never return. In contrast to the stress and pressure of their new lives, the slow pace of Cold River and the easy familiarity of small-town life provide the sisters the opportunity to let their guard down. But when they chance upon a gruesome discovery that upsets what they thought they knew about their family history, they will have to face not only their own demons, but also the late Aunt Bee's. With fun cameos of previously introduced residents of Cold River, Noblin's heartwarming story of the strength of family will please fans and newcomers alike. (*Feb.*)

★ Golden Child

Claire Adam. SJP, \$26 (288p) ISBN 978-0-525-57299-2

Adam's excellent debut explores a dark and haunting *Sophie's Choice*-like dilemma set in the lush and dangerous bush of Trinidad. At the center are 13-year-old twin brothers—Peter, the brilliant son with a

★ Big Bang

David Bowman. Little, Brown, \$32 (624p) ISBN 978-0-316-56023-8

“Where were you when you first heard President Kennedy had been shot?” asks Bowman (1957–2012) in the opening of his big, bold, and brilliant posthumous novel, and for the next 600 pages, he investigates what occurred in the years leading up to that monumental event in American history. Through the lives of such iconic figures as Norman Mailer, Elvis, William de Kooning, Marilyn Monroe, Dr. Spock, Ngô Diên Diem, Aristotle Onassis, the Kennedys themselves, and dozens of others, Bowman conjures an enormous narrative out of the troubled years from 1950 to 1963. Bowman takes the reader to Nevada, where Arthur Miller and Saul Bellow become short-term neighbors while waiting to obtain quickie divorces; to Seattle, where Jimi Hendrix and Bruce Lee have a strange encounter; to Mexico City, where William S. Burroughs shoots his wife in the head during a William Tell stunt gone horribly wrong; to Robert McNamara’s home, where he and some Washington, D.C., friends have a book club; to Vietnam, where a fake coup quickly becomes a real one; and, of course, to Dallas on the day the President was gunned down. Bowman (*Let the Dog Drive*) relates all of these remarkable tales with a straight-faced, just-the-facts approach, stripping these giants of the 20th century of their mythic status and rendering them as mere humans—caught, like everyone, in the crossfire of unrelenting history. Bowman’s self-described “nonfiction novel” is a stunning and singular achievement. (Jan.)



golden future, and Paul, the family’s sorrow—who are simultaneously lifted and doomed by the aspirations of their parents, relatives, and teachers. The first of three parts begins with the disappearance of Paul after a harsh tongue-lashing by his father, Clyde. The second part reveals Paul’s troubled childhood, in which he’s cast as mentally slow and Peter as a genius by their doting mother, Joy, Paul’s lifelong protector. It’s also when the concern of an Irish priest at the boys’ school in Port of Spain opens Paul to his first-ever glimmer of hope and confidence—before a break-in at the family’s rural home triggers the tragic chain of events leading to Paul’s disappearance. In the third part, Clyde makes the heartbreaking choice—forced by a jealous family member—that seals

the fate of the boys and family. Throughout this stunning portrait of Trinidad’s multicultural diversity, and one family’s sacrifices, soaring hopes and ultimate despair, Adam weaves a poetic lightness and beauty that will transfix readers. (Jan.)

Learning to See: A Novel of Dorothea Lange, the Woman Who Revealed the Real America

Elise Hooper. Morrow, \$15.99 trade paper (384p) ISBN 978-0-06-268653-4

In an earnest sophomore effort that closely hews to biographical facts, Hooper (*The Other Alcott*) presents a fictionalized account of photographer Lange, who snapped the famous *Migrant Mother* picture in 1936. Hooper’s Lange is scrappy, fighting for success first as a portrait photographer

in San Francisco in the late 1910s and into the 1920s, then as a documentarian of American life during the Great Depression and WWII. Lange’s tenacity stems from a troubled childhood—a bout with polio that left her with a twisted foot, an absent father, and an overworked mother. She’s determined to do better than her parents by attaining a rewarding career and a happy family life. But Lange’s first marriage, to painter Maynard Dixon, unravels with his infidelities. When their incomes take a hit from the Depression, Lange decides they should separate and place their two sons in foster care. She finds a better second marriage to Paul Taylor, an economist, but spends years trying to repair her relationships with her sons. Historical fiction fans will gobble up Hooper’s novel and be left with the satisfied feeling that they have lived through much of the 20th century with Dorothea Lange. *Agent: Barbara Braun Assoc. (Jan.)*

Sacred Cesium Ground and Isa’s Deluge: Two Novellas of Japan’s 3/11 Disaster

Kimura Yusuke, trans. from the Japanese by Doug Slaymaker. Columbia Univ., \$20 (160p) ISBN 978-0-231-18943-9

The perseverance and anger of survivors of the 2011 tsunami and subsequent nuclear meltdown that devastated the Tohoku region of Japan unites this pair of strident novellas from Kimura, a native of the area. In “Sacred Cesium Ground,” Nishino volunteers at a ranch whose owner, Sendo, has refused the government’s order to slaughter his irradiated cattle. Nishino wonders whether all she is doing is prolonging the cows’ suffering, but Sendo persists, explaining, “I am not gonna allow it to be as though this never was.” In “Isa’s Deluge,” Shoji is preoccupied with dreams of his uncle Isa, a nursing home-bound former fisherman infamous for his drunkenness and violence, particularly “the wounds inflicted in onboard knife fights.” The stories about Isa that his family tells Shoji convinces him that his uncle is a reincarnation of an Emishi, a medieval warrior from one of the region’s proudly independent tribes. Though Kimura’s agenda forces his storytelling into a supporting role, each novella offers a persuasive alternative to the trite cry of “Ganbare Nippon; together we

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can beat this, Japan!” that spread after the disasters. Nishino contemplates remaining at the farm forever, while Shoji imagines leading a violent assault on Tokyo; however divergent, each character’s reaction feels authentic to the suffering of Tohoku. (Jan.)

Miraculum

Steph Post. Polis, \$26 (336p) ISBN 978-1-947993-41-9

In this underwhelming novel from Post (*Lightwood*) a circus hires on a mysterious stranger and soon finds itself suffering from a string of unexplained tragedies. Touring the Louisiana-Texas border in 1922, Pontilliar’s Spectacular Star Light Miraculum is made up of a rough crowd of outcasts and runaways, everyone holding secrets and grudges against one another. When the geek—a member of the show who bites off the heads of small animals—is found dead from an apparent suicide by hanging, a well-dressed man named Daniel shows up out of nowhere and offers to take his place. But Ruby, a snake charmer and the daughter of the circus owner, has a feeling Daniel is hiding something sinister. While the circus atmosphere Post creates is one of danger and intrigue, there’s little actual mystery to be found here. The story moves too quickly, leaving the characters underdeveloped and their motivations unclear. Twists are also telegraphed in advance through jumps in perspective that often make the story hard to follow. Both too rakish and supernatural to be believable, Daniel maintains an uncanny effect on all those around him from his introduction until the novel’s predictable end. Despite the rich setting and strong concept, Post’s story of a macabre travelling spectacular fails to captivate. (Jan.)

The Falconer

Dana Czapnik. Atria, \$25 (288p) ISBN 978-1-5011-9322-4

In her flawed first novel, Czapnik recreates the New York City of 1993 as seen through the eyes of Lucy Adler, an Upper West Side high school student who lives for basketball. Lucy is a member of her school’s girls’ basketball team and also plays pickup games in Riverside Park—where she is often the sole girl on the court—with her wealthy friend, Percy Abney, who seems oblivious to the fact that Lucy is in love

with him. Also playing major roles in Lucy’s life are her best friend and teammate, Alexis Feliz, and two downtown female artists, Violet and Max, who share an apartment in SoHo and impart to Lucy important lessons about life, love, and art. Lucy spends most of the book wandering around Manhattan, giving her story a plotless feel. And Lucy and her friends sound way too mature and savvy for their teenage years. (Lucy, for instance, describes a character having a beard “that belongs on a Hasidic rabbi from Warsaw circa 1934.”) Despite a lived-in sense of place, this coming-of-age novel seems to be about jaded young characters who have already come of age, leaving them—and the reader—with little room for emotional development. (Jan.)

The Best Possible Angle

Lloyd Johnson. Lloyd Johnson, \$14 trade paper (294p) ISBN 978-0-9973234-4-3

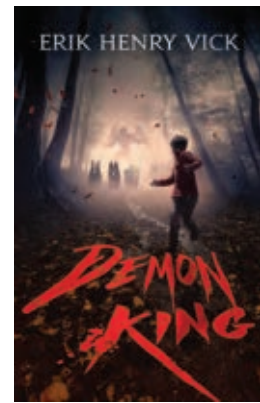
Secrets, blackmail, and murder make for a tantalizing trifecta in Johnson’s edgy and entertaining novel. If the buzz in Tinseltown over his soon-to-be-released movie, *It Is What It Is*, is to be believed, then hunky Kendrick Black is on the verge of becoming a huge star—and after five years of struggling, he’s more than ready. Then, while visiting family in Minnesota, Kendrick gets into an accident, inadvertently killing a little girl who jumps in front of his car. He flees the scene in a panic before calling Lenox, his best friend, who takes care of everything and counsels him to carry on as if nothing ever happened. As Kendrick’s star continues to rise, he begins having nightmares about the hit-and-run, plagued by shame and guilt, problems that are compounded when Sabathany, his opportunistic girlfriend, learns Kendrick’s secret and decides to blackmail him. The well-plotted story features some complex characters who all seem to have an angle—some are devoid of a moral compass while others, such as Kendrick, test the limits of how far they’re willing to allow their moral compasses to veer for the sake of their survival. This is a sharp, suspenseful novel. (BookLife)

A Lady in Havana

Ashley Morgan. Gatekeeper, \$9.95 trade paper (295p) ISBN 978-1-64237-142-0

A torrid love affair and a country on the brink of revolution mesmerize in this

Advertisement



Demon King

Erik Henry Vick.
Ratatoskr Publishing, \$23.99
trade paper (650p)
ISBN 978-0999079522



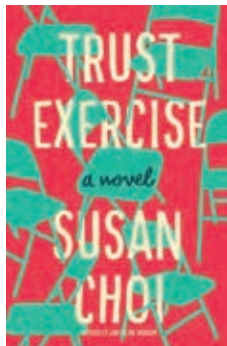
Vick’s dark, tense thriller pits young kids—and their older selves—against a demonic evil and his twisted daughters in Upstate New York. In 1979, Benny Cartwright knows something is wrong when his friend Toby Burton doesn’t show up for school. He sets out to find his friend and is almost captured by the demon Herlequin, who took Toby. Quickly, the town is besieged by Herlequin’s demon horde, including his daughter, Brigitta, and her lover, former Marine sniper Owen Gray, who goes on a shooting rampage. In 2007, Drew Reid is a college professor who can see demons (which appear human to everyone else) and kills each one he finds. Scott Lewis is a state trooper investigating the killings who quickly becomes involved in Reid’s hunt for demons. Vick bounces the story line between eras effectively, and the tension never lets up. Stephen King fans will enjoy spotting the references that Vick sprinkles throughout in homage. Readers may find the story confusing at first, the quick plot resolution too thin, and some rape and killing scenes overly graphic, but the thrills and horrors are engrossing. (BookLife)

erikhenryvick.com

★ Trust Exercise

Susan Choi. Holt, \$27 (272p) ISBN 978-1-250-30988-4

Choi's superb, powerful fifth novel, after 2013's *My Education*, marries exquisite craft with topical urgency. Set in the early 1980s, the book's first section depicts the Citywide Academy for the Performing Arts, an elite high school in an unnamed Southern city. Galvanized by the charged atmosphere created by the school's magnetic theater teacher, Mr. Kingsley, 15-year-old classmates Sarah and David have an intense sexual relationship the summer between their freshman and sophomore years. Sarah, who has taken its secrecy for granted, is horrified when David makes their romance public that fall. She repudiates him, the two spend the year estranged, and she grows increasingly isolated until an English theater troupe makes an extended visit to the school. When she is pursued by one of the troupe's actors at the same time her classmate Karen falls in love with its director, the two young women form a fraught, ambivalent bond. The novel's second segment reintroduces the characters a dozen years later, shifting from Sarah's perspective into to a new viewpoint that casts most of what readers thought they knew into doubt. After the tensions of the past culminate in an act at once shocking and inevitable, a brief coda set in 2013 adds a final bold twist. Choi's themes—among them the long reverberations of adolescent experience, the complexities of consent and coercion, and the inherent unreliability of narratives—are timeless and resonant. Fiercely intelligent, impeccably written, and observed with searing insight, this novel is destined to be a classic. (Apr.)



his idiosyncratic ways of conceiving them—manifests both in the poems' style and content. This volume is gracefully unified by its commitment to enjambment as a way of rendering familiar narratives suddenly and wonderfully strange. As the book unfolds, the work is increasingly inhabited by silence, which amplifies the surreal and often disconcerting moments in each intricately imagined dreamscape. Šalamun provocatively places the line in tension with the sentence, allowing suspense to accumulate and undermining expectations of narrative resolution. Šalamun's poems are as subversive in their craft as they are in their thinking, and this translation preserves that originality of thought and expression. (Jan.)

Invasive Species

Marwa Helal. Nightboat, \$15.95 trade paper (96p) ISBN 978-1-937658-93-9

Physical, psycho-spiritual, and linguistic displacement form a nexus of poetic lines that course through this restless, memoiristic, and deeply felt debut from Helal. The book opens and closes with sections of short, plainspoken poems and blocks of runaway, breathless, form-shifting prose texts. Meanwhile, the core hinges on an abecedarian mini-memoir of Helal's family emigration from Egypt to the U.S., and her subsequent travels back and forth as she navigates 912.5 days of a dehumanizing and bureaucratic visa process to remain in "A country that fakes left but passes a hard right." Much of the collection takes place in cars, airports, waiting rooms; in dreams and songs; and in inventively reworked immigration documents. In this latter form, Helal reverses expectations (and syntax) and deflects the unidirectional flow of state authority with a biting sense of humor that jumps from threat to cartoonish mockery to near despair, her only constant a dead-aim of purpose: "these motherfuckers have a green card lottery while refugee babies wash up drowned at sea." Drawing on influences as disparate as June Jordan, DJ Khaled, and L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetics, Helal finds in poetry something that goes beyond resistance or balm, and might even approach hope. (Jan.)

historical romance by the pseudonymous Morgan. It's the early 1950s, and dutiful Florida wife Dorothy "Dimple" Duncan (who lives in a shabby bungalow "near Coral Gables, not in it") joins her husband, Dallis, on a trip to Havana, where they embark on a risky business venture. Their local contact is handsome attorney Roberto Montero, who makes no secret of his attraction to Dorothy. When Dallis temporarily returns to the States, Roberto and Dorothy become lovers, but she's shocked to discover that her charming lothario is the integral link between Cuba's despotic president and Fidel Castro, the man planning on overthrowing him. The story is well researched with a solid narrative, and the dialogue is peppered with charming Southern affectations as elderly Dorothy recounts the shocking events of her younger life to her adult daughter. The author writes with a convincing familiarity, and her characters' brief interactions with the likes of Lana Turner, Ernest Hemingway, Meyer Lansky, and Castro himself add historical authenticity to an

irresistible drama. (BookLife)

Poetry

★ Druids

Tomaž Šalamun, trans. from the Slovenian by Sonja Kravanja. Black Ocean, \$18.95 (112p) ISBN 978-1-939568-25-0

The poetry of the late Slovenian poet Šalamun (1941–2014) proves joyfully irreverent in this collection that defamiliarizes the everyday. In Kravanja's attentive translation, Šalamun's terse, expertly crafted lines create "dark incisions" into a world readers thought they knew. "I'm placed in God with all my flesh./ Food in a pan, the people's food./ I flow out, on all sides, like a river/ and people tell me they wash their/ souls in me," he writes. By exploiting the tension between the seen and unseen, the known and the unknowable, Šalamun destabilizes commonly held beliefs about the order of things: "Order, according to cosmic dawns." This obsession with logic and causation—and

Dorianne Laux. Norton, \$ 26.95 (128p)
ISBN 978-0-393-65233-8

‘We’ve forgotten the luxury of dumbness,/ how once we crouched naked on an outcrop/ of rock, the moon huge and untouched/ above us, speechless.” Concrete places abound: bedroom, trailer, hospital psychiatric ward, a porch. There is a lot of sex; for example, “Vacation Sex,” an aroused version of a travel tour, revels in its own obsessive pleasure. Some of the best poems here appear toward the chronologically organized collection’s end, where humor arrives despite a mother’s growing dementia. And in the long biographical poem “Arizona,” Laux writes lovingly of that same mother’s face as “a map of every place she’d been.” This is a catalogue of honest work, from beginning to end. (*Jan.*)

Hala Alyan. Mariner, \$15.99 trade paper (96p) ISBN 978-1-328-51194-2

The past never truly dies in this searing fourth collection from Alyan (*Salt Houses*), it merely resurfaces in the form of battle scars and familial wounds. The Palestinian-American poet, novelist, and clinical psychologist weaves an ever-shifting narrative that chronicles the personal history that shapes and informs her present. These kaleidoscopic flashes of former lives share the feeling and act of displacement, the way in which the body can store the mental, emotional and psychological traumas long after the inciting events have transpired. “We inherit everything. Especially questions,” Alyan writes in “The Honest Wife.” Throughout her work the theme of displacement elicits more than emotion; it’s a recurring memory. In

"Aleppo," Alyan describes "how a lone bomb can erase a lineage: the nicknames for your mother, the ghost stories, the only song that put your child to sleep." People do not merely inherit memories, they also inherit the accompanying pain; the book's prevalence of couplets may attest to this kind of pairing. In "Armadillo," where Alyan recounts family memories, she asks and answers, "What do we do with heartache? Tow it." The inheritance of displacement is pervasive, as Alyan describes, and her lines are prone to linger in the minds of readers just like the ghosts that haunt the work itself. (*Ian.*)

Patrick Coleman. Tupelo, \$16.95 trade paper
(104p) ISBN 978-1-946482-15-0

“Every morning I drive past wild horses on the way to work,” writes Coleman in a superb debut composed via audio recording during his commute to and from his job at the San Diego Museum of Art. The book features a rich mix of ekphrastic, landscape, and self-reflective prose poems. “I need distance, loss, or its possibility; I need the world to cede to mind and memory,” Coleman writes; this sentiment runs through the collection and complements his interest in the movement of thought through conversation and wordplay. Throughout, he muses and observes in understated lines: “Can it be childlike when it comes from a child? But childish isn’t right either.” Each poem is paired in loose conversation with a color image of a painting or sculpture from the San Diego Museum of Art. This added visual dimension expands each poem’s universe, created as they were in small pockets of time between the attentions of new fatherhood and work meetings and against the backdrop of California wildfires that smolder on the horizon. “I think of my wife and daughter, at home now, waiting for me only five minutes away, and how all distances are now measured as time.” Coleman artfully captures the transcendent moments within a busy life when “unfocused desires squeeze through the seams.” (*Dec.*)

Andrea Gibson. Button, \$16 trade paper
(112p) ISBN 978-1-943735-42-6

Propelled by all that is raw, heartfelt, and confessional, this fifth collection from



Christa Sadler
This Earth Press/National
Sawdust, \$60 hardcover (270p)
ISBN 978-0692982501

“In this thoughtful companion to Murat Eyuboglu’s 2016 documentary of the same name, river guide Sadler (*Dawn of the Dinosaurs: The Late Triassic in the American Southwest*) traces the conflict-laden and cautionary history of the Colorado River and its basin, following its evolution from untamed, free-flowing river to human-engineered disaster area. Lavishly illustrated and beautifully produced, the book provides a flat if broad overview of the river’s history as, variously, sustainer of Native Americans, colonizing pathway for Spanish missionaries, incubator for rampant development, political and social cauldron, and victim of climate change. Explorer John Wesley Powell made the majestic Grand Canyon and Colorado River famous in the late 19th century, and proposed “commonwealths” with boundaries based on an area’s watershed instead of random development, predicting “a heritage of conflict and litigation over water rights, for there is not enough water to supply these lands!” Policymakers ignored Powell’s prophetic words, however, parceling out the “liquid property” to the competing demands of agriculture, urban growth, and industry, with the result that resources are now stretched dangerously thin even as climate change worsens conditions. Sadler’s in-depth exploration of the Colorado River and its rich legacy offers a thought-provoking if unsettling look at society’s destructive exploitation of the water and its failure to practice Powell’s concepts of conservation. (BookLife)

Gibson (*Take Me With You*) is a tour de force of performance poetry. Gibson is a natural storyteller and delivers with gumption, whether narrating a visit to an ex-lover's new ivy-coated apartment or digitally editing a sister's mug shot. Recounting the Orlando nightclub shooting, where first responders "walked through the horrific scene/ of bodies and called out,/ *If you are alive, raise your hand*," Gibson's speaker recalls being in bed hundreds of miles away, imagining that "in that exact moment/ my hand twitched in my sleep,/ some unconscious part of me aware/ that I had a pulse,/ that I was alive." The book's subject matter ranges widely, with Gibson delivering a tongue-in-cheek ode to public panic attacks ("You found me at Disney World,/ in line for The Little Mermaid/ Slow Moving Clam Ride") between tackling Tinder dating and gun violence, and confronting issues that affect the greater LGBTQ community. Despite Gibson's storytelling prowess, some of these poems feel a little too familiar while simultaneously falling flat on the page. Though this work lacks the vivacity of Gibson's stage presence and live performance, the book is notable for its energy and diverse array of voice-driven poems. (*Dec.*)

Pungent dins concentric

Vanessa Couto Johnson. Tolsun, \$14.95 trade paper (82p) ISBN 978-1-948800-06-8

From its synaesthetic title to its closing poem, this complex debut from Johnson shows that surrealism remains alive and swell. The Brazilian-born Texan poet offers a new manifesto—"No need to order, but a desire to, with take out"—and regales readers with puns ("Hippocratic oaf"; "I skid you not") as well as vertiginous shifts of voice, tone, and register. Postmodern juxtapositions ("Captain Kirk with Plato's stepchildren"; "A baby in line for a burrito") and copious parentheticals—" (sp)rang," "c(lock)," "peri(met)er"—announce that neither rhyme nor reason need apply. Johnson also tells narrative and lyric conventions to take a hike: "We watch Canadian cultists sleeveless undershirted ski-masking with machetes in a forest chasing the coated." At such moments, one may think of Wallace Stevens's critique of surrealism, that it invents without discovering. And yet, the charge of frivolity does not stick here. A skin-shedding lizard

may be both this book's totem and a symbolic figure for the reader; when the speaker imagines rearranging a pet gecko's tank, "She soundlessly scrapes the glass to learn new vertices." "Walls are made to be stroked," Johnson reminds readers, as those surfaces are but another locus of bewilderment and discovery: "Laugh until full, until body itself is a world." (*Dec.*)

Things That Go

Laura Eve Engel. Octopus, \$16.95 trade paper (136p) ISBN 978-0-9861811-8-4

Engel traces intricacies and inaccuracies of memory in her nimble, philosophical debut. Shades of difference and nuance of feeling, as well as the vast chasms that can exist between two people, feature as prominent themes. In "The Field You Weren't," Engel astutely draws a line between fantasy and reality, noting the temptation to look back on a relationship with rose-colored glasses when the desire to reminisce "sits/ like a magnet sits nearby another magnet trembling." Meanwhile, she amusingly describes falling in love as "Like finally finding inside a haystack/ there's a more beautiful/ haystack." Weather patterns and trains are constant touchstones, as when Engel describes how "A girl may not be meant/ to think of her mouth/ as a smokestack but insists// are you sure we're still moving is a feeling/ and that feeling chuffs like a train/ until delay." In a series interspersed across the collection, Engel speaks for Lot's wife, capturing the plaintive voice of one rendered inert for eternity: "what will grow up/ around me will certainly/ die or else learn/ to live by my salt." Recording and examining the minutia of emotional response, Engel offers moments of deep insight and quiet revelation that should prove relatable to anyone overwhelmed or mystified by their own wild feelings. (*Dec.*)

Mystery/Thriller

Article 353

Tanguy Viel, trans. from the French by William Rodarmor. Other Press, \$15.99 trade paper (160p) ISBN 978-1-59051-933-2

Martial Kreneur, the narrator of this beguiling noir from French author Viel (*Beyond Suspicion*), isn't surprised when the police arrest him a few hours after heaving

Antoine Lazenac out of Lazenac's fishing boat and leaving the man to drown miles off the Brittany coast. What follows is Kreneur's explanation for his crime to the judge presiding over his case. Kreneur, a laid-off shipwright employed as a groundskeeper at a rundown château, gradually reveals how he got conned into investing all his cash in an ocean-view apartment in a building complex that Lazenac, a slick property developer, was promising to construct on the site of the château. After six years, Kreneur realizes that Lazenac has no intention of doing anything. Meanwhile, Kreneur's 17-year-old son is feeling the strain his father is under and acts out. Arresting metaphors enliven the spare prose (when Kreneur signs the papers sealing the real estate deal, "it felt like I'd had the Shroud of Turin authenticated by Christ in person"). Viel should win new American fans with this elegant effort. (*Feb.*)

★ The Killer Collective

Barry Eisler. Thomas & Mercer, \$24.95 (416p) ISBN 978-1-5039-0426-2

In this crackling-good thriller from bestseller Eisler (*The Night Trade*), Seattle PD sex crimes detective Livia Lone, assassin John Rain, and former Marine sniper Dox form a testy alliance to combat a vile conspiracy involving corrupt and toxic government agencies. When Livia survives an assassination attempt while investigating an international child pornography ring, she learns that



those behind the hit may work for the FBI. Livia recruits Dox, her partner from *The Night Trade*, to aid and abet her. Meanwhile, Rain—who originally was offered the hit

on Livia—must come out of retirement to assemble a world-class team of black ops all-stars to battle a parallel threat. Persuasive action sequences lead to the merging of the two forces midway through the story. The feisty interplay among these killer elites is as irresistible as if one combined the Justice League

with the Avengers, swapping out the superhero uniforms for cutting-edge weaponry and scintillating spycraft. By the satisfying conclusion, the world has been scrubbed a bit cleaner of perfidy. This is delightfully brutal fun. *Agent: Laura Rennert, Andrea Brown Literary Agency. (Feb.)*

A Spy in Exile

Jonathan de Shalit, trans. from the Hebrew by Steve Cohen. Atria/Bestler, \$27 (384p) ISBN 978-1-5011-7056-0

On orders from the Israeli prime minister, former Mossad agent Ya'ara Stein, the heroine of this middling spy thriller from the pseudonymous de Shalit (*Traitor*), assembles a crew of promising amateurs to form a secret strike team. Ya'ara believes that newbies will be effective, because they won't fall into the predictable routines that come from the training of experienced spooks. After a few practice runs on low-stakes missions in Germany, the team steps into the big leagues with a plan to assassinate two Muslim radicals, one in London, the other in Brussels. Aided by Ya'ara's chief recruiter, Amnon Aslan, the team carries out the two hits with stunning alacrity. Another mission, however, never materializes, and the rest of the story focuses on Ya'ara rebuilding past relationships and hand-wringing about her career and personal life. In between some exciting moments, readers will find themselves waiting around for something to happen. Those expecting to glean much inside knowledge of espionage from de Shalit, "a former high-ranking member of the Israeli Intelligence Community," will be disappointed. *(Feb.)*

The Lost Man

Jane Harper. Flatiron, \$27.99 (320p) ISBN 978-1-250-10568-4

Australia's outback, with its brutal climate and equally bruising isolation, looms as large as any character in this stark standalone from bestseller Harper (*Force of Nature*). For years, the three Bright brothers—divorced dad Nathan, the eldest; family man and everybody's favorite, middle child Cameron; and the mentally challenged youngest, Bub—have maintained an uneasy equilibrium on adjacent cattle ranches. That flies out the window the week before Christmas when Cameron goes missing; his desiccated corpse is

subsequently discovered a few miles from his perfectly operational truck in the shadow of the eerie headstone known as the stockman's grave. Absent any clear indications of foul play, the local authorities undertake a perfunctory investigation, leaving a troubled Nathan to start asking questions that no one wants to answer. In the grim journey that follows, the surviving members of the Bright family must confront some devastating secrets. Harper's sinewy prose and flinty characters compel, but the dreary story line may cause some readers to give up before the jaw-dropping denouement. *Author tour. Agent: Daniel Lazar, Writers House. (Feb.)*

The Moroccan Girl

Charles Cumming. St. Martin's, \$27.99 (368p) ISBN 978-1-250-12995-6

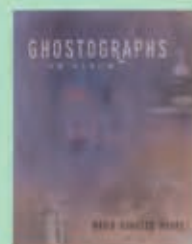
At the start of this uneven spy novel from bestseller Cumming (*The Trinity Six*), thriller writer Kit Carradine is accosted on a London street by Robert Mantis, who claims to be a big fan of his books. Mantis, whose card identifies him as a British government "operational control center specialist," persuades Carradine to do some spying for the U.K. in Morocco, where he's to attend a literary event. His tasks: carry some cash to one of Mantis's associates and keep an eye out for a "remarkable young woman, cunning and unpredictable." In Morocco, Carradine succeeds in identifying the girl of the title: Lara Bartok, the former girlfriend of Ivan Simakov, the leader of a revolutionary group that's been kidnapping right-wing journalists. The Russian government wants to stop Simakov; the American government may also be involved. Cumming is a terrific stylist with a great sense of place, but the convoluted plot becomes tiresome. Readers will struggle to care about Carradine, a romantic dreaming of glory, who's more sad sack than hero. *Agent: Luke Janklow, Janklow & Nesbit. (Feb.)*

I Invited Her In

Adele Parks. Mira, \$16.99 trade paper (448p) ISBN 978-0-7783-6921-9

In 1999, when Melanie Harrison, the heroine of this underwhelming psychological thriller from British author Parks (*Playing Away*), dropped out of university after becoming pregnant after a one-night stand, she lost touch with her best friend,

SPD HAND- PICKED



Ghostographs: An Album

Maria Romasco Moore
Rose Metal Press
Fiction, Hybrid Genre
978-1-941628-15-7



We Women Have No Fatherland

Ilse Frapan, trans.
James J. Conway
Rixdorf Editions
Fiction, Women's Studies
978-3-947325-09-2



The Word Pretty

Elisa Gabbert
Black Ocean
Literary Nonfiction,
Women's Studies
978-1-939568-26-7



Invasions

Gavin Gimpelevich
Instar Books
Fiction, LGBTQIA Studies
978-1-68219-910-7

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Abigail Curtiz. Seventeen years later, Mel is living comfortably in Wolvney, England, with her doting husband, Ben, and their three kids. Out of nowhere, she receives an email from Abi, who explains that she's getting a divorce from her cheating husband and moving back to the U.K. from America. Mel invites Abi to stay in her home indefinitely, and Abi eagerly accepts. After spending years in suburbia, Mel can't help becoming infatuated with the glamorous Abi, who interviews celebrities for a living and loves sharing the details of her sex life. Soon, however, Mel gets the impression that Abi wants more than just a place to stay and time to reconnect. Parks generates some tension by switching among the perspectives of Mel, Abi, and Ben, but stock characters and predictable plot developments make this a lesser effort. *Agent: Jonny Geller, Curtis Brown. (Feb.)*

The Reckless:

A Bruno Johnson Novel

David Putnam. Oceanview, \$26.95 (320p)
ISBN 978-1-60809-288-8

Putnam's sixth Bruno Johnson novel, the overstuffed sequel to 2018's *The Innocents*, further explores Bruno's years as a young

L.A. County deputy sheriff. Johnson and his buddy, Ned Kiefer, are on loan from the violent crimes unit to the FBI, which tosses them several preliminary crimes that Bruno solves with preternatural aplomb and that reconnect him with an old love, FBI special agent Chelsea Miller, with whom he once worked on a case that went bad. Finally, the Feds reveal the special problem that Bruno and Ned have really been chosen to handle: finding a way to arrest and charge Amos Leroy Gadd, who is recruiting children to rob banks in an effort to isolate himself from the crimes. Bruno and Ned must stop the robberies, preferably without hurting the children, and tie them back to Gadd. As the pace picks up, the plot takes some startling twists. Putnam, a retired cop, uses his long experience in law enforcement to good effect, but some readers will feel he covers too much territory too fast. *Agents: Mike and Susan Farris, Farris Literary. (Feb.)*

★ The Golden Tresses of the Dead: A Flavia de Luce Novel

Alan Bradley. Delacorte, \$26 (352p) ISBN 978-0-345-54002-7

A ghoulish question is at the heart of

Bradley's excellent 10th Flavia de Luce novel set in 1950s England (after 2018's *The Grave's a Fine and Private Place*):

"How had an embalmed finger found its way from the hand of a dead woman in a Surrey cemetery into the heart of a wedding cake at Buckshaw?" Though only in her early teens, chemistry prodigy Flavia has formed a private detective agency with Arthur Dogger, her late father's valet, at the family estate of Buckshaw. The discovery at her sister Ophelia's wedding of the severed digit—which turns out to have come from the corpse of a guitar impresario—presents Flavia and Dogger with her first case. Meanwhile, the sleuths get their first client when Anastasia Prill asks for their help in recovering some sensitive stolen letters relating to her father's homeopathic practice, an inquiry that turns into a homicide investigation. Bradley, who has few peers at combining fair-play clueing with humor and has fun mocking genre conventions, shows no sign of running out of ideas. *Agent: Denise Bukowski, Bukowski Agency. (Jan.)*

The Widows

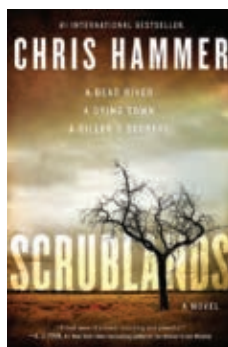
Jess Montgomery. Minotaur, \$26.99 (336p)
ISBN 978-1-250-18452-8

Montgomery's deeply felt debut, set in hardscrabble Appalachian Ohio coal-mining country in 1925, centers on two determined women on opposite sides of the law—Lily Ross, a sheriff's wife, and moonshiner and union organizer Marvena Whitcomb, a miner's widow—who are based on a pair of formidable historical figures, Maude Collins, Ohio's first female sheriff, and activist Mary Harris "Mother" Jones. Only six months after the disastrous cave-in at a mine managed by Bronwyn County sheriff Daniel Ross's ruthless half-brother, Luther, who has hired head-cracking Pinkertons to keep his increasingly mutinous workers in line, Daniel's shocking murder—allegedly at the hands of a miner—thrusts secretly pregnant mother of two Lily into the crossfire as acting sheriff. As Lily starts to investigate her husband's killing, she swiftly discovers a lot that doesn't add up, as well as some of his carefully guarded secrets, among them his connection to Marvena. Some of the plot twists prove more surprising than convincing, but the feisty female protagonists do their real-life foremothers proud.

★ Scrublands

Chris Hammer. Touchstone, \$26.99 (384p) ISBN 978-1-5011-9674-4

Sydney journalist Martin Scarsden, the hero of Australian author Hammer's stellar first novel, is still recuperating from a traumatic experience while covering a story in the Middle East when he's sent to Riversend to write an article about how the people of the drought-stricken town are coping one year after Byron Swift, a local priest, inexplicably shot down five men in cold blood outside his church one Sunday morning. Martin first stops at a bookstore, where he meets its beautiful owner, Mandalay Blonde, who's struggling to come to grips with a painful past. Mandy insists that Byron, who was killed by a cop shortly after he committed his horrific crime, was a decent man who treated her and her late mother kindly, not the child abuser some believed him to be. Mandy urges Martin to try to find out why he did it. Martin learns after talking to others that more tragedies may be connected with the mass murder. The stakes rise when Martin breaks a journalist's fundamental rule by becoming part of the story, which turns out to be a "heady mix of murder, religion, and sex," as Martin comes to realize. Richly descriptive writing coupled with deeply developed characters, relentless pacing, and a bombshell-laden plot make this whodunit virtually impossible to put down. *Agent: Faye Bender, Book Group. (Jan.)*



Agent: Elisabeth Weed, Book Group. (Jan.)

Take-Out and Other Tales of Culinary Crime

Rob Hart. Polis, \$16 trade paper (304p)
ISBN 978-1-943818-42-6

Hart's first story collection offers 16 winning food-themed tales, three previously unpublished. Whether his leads are operating a taco truck ("Confessions of a Taco Truck Owner") or running a family business that has lost customers to trendier competitors ("How to Make the Perfect New York Bagel"), Hart (the Ash McKenna series) brings their worlds to life through effective use of character and mood. Highlights include the grim "Butcher's Block," which presents a sadistic variant on Food Network cooking competition shows, and the satirical "Foodies," which takes an enjoyably vicious dig at food snobs, for whom dining at the latest hot place even trumps their basic humanity. In "Creampuff," someone has invented the new cronut, the Creamelé, a baked French pastry with frozen ice cream inside. This latest "it" food induces people to line up at 4 a.m. to buy one, but the focus is on the bakery's bouncer, who ends up with his throat slit. The varied settings and story lines effectively showcase Hart's versatility.

Agent: Josh Getzler, HSG Agency. (Jan.)

Crewel and Unusual:

A Haunted Yarn Shop Mystery

Molly Macrae. Pegasus Crime, \$25.95 (272p)
ISBN 978-1-64313-008-8

In Macrae's solid sixth Haunted Yarn Shop mystery (after 2015's *Knot the Usual Suspects*), the residents of Blue Plum, Tenn., are saddened when retired banker Garland Brown is found dead at a mountain trailhead parking area, his head bashed in with a rock. But life must go on, and Kath Rutledge, a textile preservation specialist and owner of Weaver's Cat Yarn Shop, is drawn into a quarrel between two acquaintances when she's asked to authenticate a 1940s era embroidered tablecloth belonging to Belinda Moyer, owner of a space in the Vault, a co-op for small arts-related shops in a repurposed bank. Nervie Bales thinks Belinda's vintage linens are fake. Belinda accuses Nervie of stealing her patterns. The feud takes a deadly turn when Belinda is found dead with a pair of scissors from Weaver's Cat

stuck in her back. Could the murders be related? With the help of Geneva, the resident ghost of Weaver's Cat, Kath and friends lay a trap to catch a killer. The motive for the murders may be weak, but cozy fans will enjoy the quirky characters and charming, small-town setting. *(Jan.)*

The Guilt We Carry

Samuel W. Gailey. Oceanview, \$26.95 (336p)
ISBN 978-1-60809-320-5

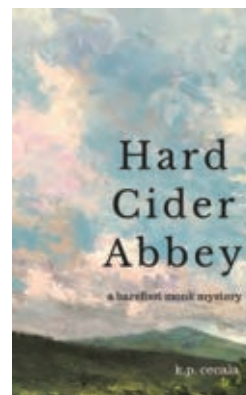
One evening in 2005, the parents of 15-year-old Alice O'Farrell, the heroine of this gripping tale of redemption from Gailey (*Deep Winter*), leave her in charge of her bratty four-year-old brother, Jason, at their home in Wilmington, N.C. After Jason paints her bedroom walls with her fingernail polish, Alice yells at him. While she tries to clean the walls, Jason traps himself in the basement dryer and dies. Six years later, the guilt-ridden Alice is an alcoholic reduced to working as a bartender at a strip joint in Harrisburg, Pa. One morning, she wakes up next to the corpse of her boss, who has overdosed, in his trailer. Next to the bed is a duffel bag containing \$91,000 in cash. Alice flees with the loot in search of refuge in Wilmington with an old friend, but on the train ride south she can't help intervening when she spots a teenage girl being abused. The plot unfolds logically, and Gailey does a superior job of making his flawed lead sympathetic. *Agent: Esmond Harmsworth, Aevitas Creative Management. (Jan.)*

The Liar's Room

Simon Lelic. Berkley, \$16 trade paper (352p)
ISBN 978-0-440-00043-3

Set mostly during a single marathon therapy session, this unsettling psychological thriller from British author Lelic (*The New Neighbors*) pits the counselor calling herself Susanna Fenton against the young man who arrives at her office one day and introduces himself as Adam Geraghty. Susanna, who has crafted a second act with her now-14-year-old daughter, Emily, after a horrific series of events 14 years earlier, instantly senses that on some level she knows Adam. When their session begins, however, his pointed questions start to suggest he's the one who knows precisely who she is—and that unless she can manage to outmaneuver him, her carefully reconstructed life could come

Advertisement



Hard Cider Abbey

K.P. Cecala

\$12.99 paperback
ISBN 9781721125746



Gentle humor and restrained prose lift Cecala's series launch. Odo LeRoi, a young monk, is transferred from an abbey in Quebec to Holy Face Abbey in Appalachian West Virginia, where he encounters an eclectic cast of hard cider-brewing monks. He also stumbles on a corpse in the woods—that of the abbey's esteemed librarian, Fr. Lucian Powers, whose death is initially thought to be a suicide. Odo himself is an enigmatic addition to the abbey: while considered mute since birth, the truth is that "he could speak. He simply chose not to." Brother Emerick Ottlesby, a straight-talking veteran born and raised in the hardened community surrounding the abbey, takes Odo under his wing. Emerick, who's certain that the good-natured Lucian would never have taken his own life and was instead murdered by a monk at the abbey, and Odo work together to track down the killer. Cecala crafts a quirky mystery with two unlikely sleuths and an exceptionally appealing setting. Readers will be eager for more adventures from the endearing duo. (BookLife)

www.kpcecala.net

crashing down. Leaving or calling for help isn't an option, given the evidence Adam supplies that he knows Emily and that her safety hinges on Susanna's cooperation. Though the increasingly dangerous sparring between the pair does, inevitably, take on a somewhat stogy quality, the painful secrets exposed and the tragic linked past that emerges contain enough emotional truth to carry the day. *Agent: Caroline Wood, Felicity Bryan Assoc. (U.K.). (Jan.)*

★ **Murder at the Queen's Old Castle**
Cora Harrison. Severn, \$28.99 (240p) ISBN 978-0-7278-8830-3

Harrison is at the top of her game in her sixth whodunit set in 1920s Cork, Ireland, featuring the Reverend Mother Aquinas (after 2018's *Death of a Novice*). Joseph Fitzwilliam, the notoriously tight-fisted owner of a "shop selling cheap clothes and household linens" known as the Queen's Old Castle, has offered to let the reverend mother take her pick of water-damaged goods to distribute to the city's poor. While doing so, the religious leader is horrified to see Joseph, who's clutching a small barrel-shaped canister used for transporting change, fall over a railing outside his office on an overhead platform to his death. The canister smells of gas, suggesting he was poisoned. Joseph's hysterical widow, who witnessed his fatal fall, cries murder, then points her finger at 14-year-old shop employee Brian Maloney, accusing the boy of mistakenly killing her husband instead of herself. While the politics of the time are not central to the plot as in other entries, the fair-play puzzle is among Harrison's finest. *Agent: Peter Buckman, Ampersand Agency (U.K.). (Jan.)*

Murder Likes It Hot:

A Downward Dog Mystery

Tracy Weber. Midnight Ink, \$15.99 trade paper (288p) ISBN 978-0-7387-5069-9

At the start of Weber's gripping sixth Downward Dog Mystery (after 2018's *Pre-Meditated Murder*), Seattle yoga instructor Kate Davidson and her new husband, Michael Massey, are struggling with fertility issues. Meanwhile, she's worried about the financial impact on her business of a cut-rate yoga studio that opens directly across the street from her own Serenity Yoga.



named Rainbow, who ends up being the prime suspect when Gabriel Cousins, the youth center's director, is shot dead in his office. Rainbow has plenty of problems, but Kate is convinced of her innocence and takes it upon herself to help the girl by finding out who really killed Gabriel. Weber doesn't hold back on depicting the agony of infertility, or the dangerous and miserable plight of troubled youth living on the streets of Seattle. Those who like their cozies with a dark edge will be rewarded. *Agent: Priya Doraswamy, Lotus Lane Literary. (Jan.)*

Sydney Noir

Edited by John Dale. Akashic, \$15.95 trade paper (256p) ISBN 978-1-61775-581-1

Sydney is a good choice for Akashic's first noir anthology set in Australia, since, as Dale notes in his introduction, it "has more unsolved murders than any other Australian city, as well as more drive-by shootings and more jailed politicians." The 14 uniformly strong selections feature familiar subgenre figures: gangsters, ethically compromised cops, and people bent on revenge for the loss of a loved one. The volume's standout is Philip McLaren's "Black Cul-De-Sac," which opens with a man named Craig, "the aboriginal liaison" for the Redfern region of Sydney, arriving at a dark alley where a murdered black man has been found. Craig has become the "politically appointed watchdog" after a wave of black deaths in police custody, a role that bears further exploration in future stories. Two other tales warrant singling out: Gabrielle Lord's "Slow Burn," with its sophisticated, slow-motion vengeance plot, and Mark Dapin's dark-hued "In the Court of the Lion King," an account of a grim struggle for survival in a Sydney prison. Fans of dark crime fiction will want to seek out other works by these

She's relieved when a friend offers her a part-time gig teaching yoga at a facility for homeless teens. The class isn't a roaring success, but Kate makes a connection with a runaway

contributors, most of whom will be unfamiliar to American readers. *(Jan.)*

What Doesn't Kill Her

Christina Dodd. HQN, \$15.99 trade paper (384p) ISBN 978-1-335-50753-2

Dodd's prequel to 2018's *Dead Girl Running* starts slowly, weighed down by protagonist Kellen Adams's complicated backstory, which includes a murder/suicide; a stolen identity; a stint in the army in Afghanistan; a stretch of homelessness; 13 months in a coma, during which she produced a child; and a budding romance with "tall, dark, handsome, Italian-American, broad-shouldered former football player" Max Di Luca. The present-day action finds Kellen at the Di Luca Winery in Oregon's Willamette Valley, trying to reconnect with her seven-year-old daughter, Rae, and re-establish a relationship with Max, the little girl's father. She accepts a job with a government agency, and is charged with picking up "a priceless antique head" and taking it to "a weird recluse expert." When Rae stows away in the van in which her mother is traveling, Kellen finds herself pursued by two groups of villains: one wants her dead, the other wants the antique marble head. Fans of romantic suspense who don't mind a lack of realism will be satisfied. *Agent: Mel Berger, William Morris Endeavor. (Jan.)*

All That Glitters: A Great Western Detective League Case

Paul Colt. Five Star, \$25.95 (305p) ISBN 978-1-4328-4955-9

A clunky and distracting framing device hampers Colt's third crime thriller based on a real-life 19th-century "association of law enforcement professionals operating across the west" (after 2017's *The Bogus Bondsman*). In 1909, reporter Robert Brentwood collects more reminiscences from retired U.S. Army Col. David Crook, who once headed the legendary Great Western Detective League and is now in a Denver rest home. Crook recounts his Colorado-based group's efforts, in 1878, to catch a jewel thief, who took advantage of the noise of the fireworks for a Chinese New Year celebration in San Francisco to blow open a safe belonging to International Imports and make off with \$60,000 in diamonds and other precious stones. Crook dispatches some of his operatives to

California, where they learn that the theft is connected with shadowy criminal syndicate El Anillo. Back in 1909, Brentwood steels himself to propose to his beloved, Crook's rest home attendant. Clichéd developments and lackluster prose ("A light scent of vanilla ice cream flavored her presence") are a barrier to engagement with the unremarkable plot. (*Jan.*)

3 Women, 4 Towns, 5 Bodies & Other Stories

Townsend Walker. Deeds, \$18.95 trade paper (286p) ISBN 978-1-947309-21-0

Walker's moody story collection blends elements of noir, thriller, and romance. Many of the 12 entries focus on dominant and resourceful female protagonists who utilize their wits and sexuality to avenge the men who have harmed or underestimated them. Perhaps the best selection—and the most literary in tone—is "The Second Coming," in which an underhanded reverend meets his match in a savvy young woman. Also notable is "Coming Home," in which a soldier in 1839 Hungary is reunited with a past lover. Walker's writing is at its finest in moments of descriptive storytelling. In contrast, repetitive erotic interludes often become more gratuitous than integral to the plot. For example, in the title novella, a female sniper, whose primary targets are violent and abusive men, silences a potential witness by removing her clothes. As a result, many of the characters feel interchangeable and can, unfortunately, be reduced to sexual stereotypes. Still, those who like to see awful men receive just retribution will be satisfied. (*BookLife*)

SF/Fantasy/Horror

★ The Lesson

Cadwell Turnbull. Blackstone, \$26.99 (272p) ISBN 978-1-5385-8464-4

Several residents of St. Thomas weather the storms of life before and after the occupation of the alien species Ynaa in Turnbull's rich debut novel about family, love, and loyalty in turbulent times. The story centers on Mera, Ynaa ambassador to the human residents of the Virgin Islands, who has hidden among humans for centuries, and Derrick Reed, her human assistant, who persists despite

accusations of betraying his kind. Neither is a perfect fit for the worlds they come from, and the closer they grow to each other, the more adversity they face. When a Ynaa kills a young man and his grieving brother responds by assassinating one of the aliens, a terrible cycle of violent retribution begins, and Mera and Derrick must choose sides. Turnbull uses a beautifully drawn cast of black characters to convey the complexity of ordinary hardship in extraordinary times. This is an ideal story for fans of Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven* and other literary science fiction novels. *Agent: Martha Millard, Sterling Lord Literistic.* (*June*)

★ The Women's War

Jenna Glass. Del Rey, \$28 (560p) ISBN 978-1-984817-20-4

Glass's substantial debut stands out as both social commentary on contemporary issues of bodily autonomy, gender, and social power and as feminist retribution fantasy, made manifest through an appealing epic fantasy setting and grounded in a carefully designed magic system. The kingdom of Aaltah's disgraced women are exiled to the Abbey of the Unwanted, where they sell potions and sex. Three generations of a powerful bloodline—led by Alysoon Rai-Brynnna, mother of two and the widowed, disinherited daughter of the aging king of Aaltah and the abbess—perform a ritual that transforms the world to give women the power to prevent all unwanted pregnancies and fatally retaliate against rapists. Alysoon becomes a target for the wrathful response of men in power, and a leader in exploring the uses of a secret new source of feminine magic. Palace intrigue clashes into open rebellion as the women decide they have had enough of being chattel. Though female leads take center stage, Glass gives real depth to her male characters as well. Personal and political aspects of the story blend gracefully together to provide a high-energy story with sweeping forward momentum toward the next installment. *Agent: Miriam Kriss, Irene Goodman Literary.* (*Mar.*)

★ A Memory Called Empire

Arkady Martine. Tor, \$24.99 (464p) ISBN 978-1-250-18643-0

Debut novelist Martine sets a careful course in this gorgeously crafted diplomatic

space opera that strands its protagonist amid imperial politics and murder. Mahit Dzmare, summoned from tiny Lsel Station to replace the previous ambassador to the Teixcalaanli Empire, Yskandr, must negotiate both for Yskandr's corpse and for the safety of her home world, an object of Imperial annexation. Her fluency in Teixcalaanli language and culture ("for a barbarian") helps her decode the messages hidden in their poetry, even as it inclines her to the same starry-eyed admiration and involvement with the Imperial court that overcame her predecessor. Her secret implant of Yskandr's memories should be aiding her, but it is 15 years out of date and, apparently, sabotaged. Mahit instead relies on her need to establish an identity of her own while juggling an aging Emperor's desire for technological immortality and a threatened military uprising to his rule. The Teixcalaanli culture comes so fully to life that the glossary in the back of the book is unnecessary. Martine allows the backstory to unroll slowly, much as Mahit struggles with her intermittent memories, walking delicately upon the tightrope of intrigue and partisan battles in the streets to safely bring the tale to a poignantly true conclusion. Readers will eagerly await the planned sequels to this impressive debut. *Agent: DongWon Song, Howard Morhaim Literary.* (*Mar.*)

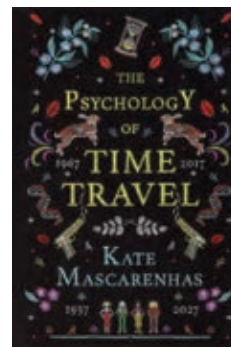
The Psychology of Time Travel

Kate Mascarenhas. Crooked Lane, \$26.99 (352p) ISBN 978-1-68331-944-3

Mascarenhas's intricately plotted debut dizzies the mind with its exciting concept but fails to follow through. Margaret, Lucille, Grace, and Barbara are all at the tops of their scientific fields, and together, they invent the first time machine, an accomplishment that ensures even the most biased men have to acknowledge their

talents.

However, when tragedy strikes, Barbara is pushed out of her career, and a complex series of events is catapulted into motion. Some of the ensuing complications



go far beyond the lives of the pioneers themselves. The story unfolds in a captivating way, and fascinating suggestions are made about the effects of time travel; Mascarenhas even hints that free will ceases to exist. Unfortunately, the plot can't make up for the lack of depth in many of the characters. Readers who value plotting and tightness of story will enjoy this novel more than those who value empathy and characterization. Most unfortunately, the women whose accomplishments are at the center of the story won't be remembered when the book is closed. *Agent: Oli Munson, A.M. Heath. (Feb.)*

Romance/Erotica

The Fearless King

Katee Robert. Forever, \$7.99 mass market (368p) ISBN 978-1-4555-9712-3

In the tense second King contemporary romantic thriller, Robert threatens the peace brokered in *The Last King* by plunging the King siblings into danger. Journey King's role in Kingdom Corp keeps her centered. When her sadistic father, Elliot, returns from a long absence, intent on seizing control of the company by terrorizing his children, a shaken Journey turns to Frank Evans, a powerful frenemy, for help. Frank desires Journey but doesn't trust the Kings. However, when an emotionally battered Journey asks him to dig up Elliot's secrets to protect her family, Frank agrees to wade in. It quickly becomes apparent that the danger Elliot poses is very real. Robert uses the gripping passion between Frank and Journey to force them to confront their fears and admit they need each other. There's nothing typical about this damsel/knight romance, and watching Journey learn to trust herself and Frank choose to let down his guard when each has so much at stake is deeply satisfying. This suspenseful installment stands alone, but new readers will definitely want to read the first book in the series. *Agent: Laura Bradford, Bradford Literary. (Feb.)*

Mystic

Cheryl Brooks. Sourcebooks Casablanca, \$7.99 mass market (384p) ISBN 978-1-4926-6163-4

This latest addition to Brooks's Cat

Star Legacy futuristic romance series will suit lovers of fated pairings and intergalactic incidents. Aiden Banadänsk lives on a world called Rhylos, haunted by visions of his people's future, a power he has denied all his life. When he meets Sula, an anthropology student on the run, his whole world is turned upside down. As Aiden and Sula grow closer, they must also concern themselves with the danger chasing Sula: a cloaked villain is wiping whole worlds clean of life, and Sula is the only living witness to this terrible act. This book has romance; some explicit, sometimes technical, sex scenes; and just enough espionage to move the story forward. It also makes some attempts to talk about prejudice and acceptance, but these pieces are not as well handled. Those who have followed the series will likely enjoy references to familiar characters, and new readers will be able to join in on the fun without feeling like they've missed too much. *(Feb.)*

Escaping His Grace

Kristin Vayden. Lyrical, \$4.99 mass market (325p) ISBN 978-1-5161-0570-0

This tepid follow-up to *Falling from His Grace*, set in Regency-era Edinburgh, lacks the luster of its predecessor, and the romance is so thin, it's almost nonexistent. Lady Samantha Chatterworth uses a false identity to shield herself from being found by her overbearing father, a duke who's determined to force her into a loveless marriage. She becomes governess to the ward of Heathcliff Marston, Viscount Kilpatrick, and immediately charms Heathcliff with her intellect and beauty. Heathcliff has been deceived by a woman in the past, and he vows not to get too attached to "Miss Miranda," despite the rush he gets every time they kiss. He feels there's nothing wrong with some fun as long as everyone involved keeps it in perspective. When Heathcliff learns that Miss Miranda is really the sister of his best friend's wife, instead of feeling betrayed, he accepts her motives and agrees to continue to aid her, but he's much less willing to have an affair with a highborn lady than he was with a governess. When her father's men catch up to her, Heathcliff offers marriage as a form of protection. The romance has a lot of potential but is

bogged down in unnecessary details of other events. Iris, Heathcliff's ward, provides some shine, but her vivaciousness is not enough to carry the story. Those who enjoyed the previous book will find this one disappointing. *(Feb.)*

★ All In

Shelley Shepard Gray. Blackstone, \$15.99 trade paper (308p) ISBN 978-1-5384-4088-9

Gray deals a winning hand in her engrossing second Bridgeport Social Club contemporary (after *Take a Chance*). Ace



Vance and his son, Finn, are new to the Bridgeport, Ohio, area, having recently moved from the small town of Spartan, W.Va. Ace wants to give 15-year-old Finn a new start

away from his emotionally absent mother, and he's also pleased about a new start for himself near his old friend Kurt. Meredith Hunt, a Pilates instructor, has spent her life protecting her heart and coping with her mother's constant expressions of disappointment. When Ace and Finn, rough-looking guys with hearts of gold, come to her rescue after a mugging, they're all in for some big changes—and life lessons that open their eyes to new possibilities and the importance of support networks. Packed with an enticing mix of heartening emotional engagement and inspirational sweetness, the light, joyous plot has just enough substance to provide ample food for thought. *Agent: Nicole Resciniti, Seymour Agency (Feb.)*

After the Gold

Erin McRae and Racheline Maltese. Avian30, \$3.99 e-book (222p) ISBN 978-1-5365-0234-3

McRae and Maltese (*A Queen from the North*) falter slightly with the tale of figure skaters Katie Nowacki and Brendan Reid, who win Olympic gold and then try to figure out what comes next in their lives. After a failed attempt at a romance years earlier, the skaters try to limit their sexual chemistry to the ice. Brendan's game for another relationship

try during a post-Olympic tour, but Katie isn't so sure. When the authors attempt to show Katie's vulnerability and flaws, she comes off as a neurotic, mercurial jerk who drives her steady, reliable partner crazy with her blame games. After Katie's knee is hurt and she opts to flee New York and a series of business meetings rather than disclose the injury, readers will question why Brendan is even trying to forge a relationship with her. But Katie redeems herself somewhat while working with Brendan on her family farm—and realizes that he is a steady partner in more ways than one. The figure skating details feel authentic, but the plot skims the surface of emotion. This ice needs a bit more fire. (*BookLife*)

Comics

Escape from Bitch Mountain

Edited by Hannah K. Chapman. Avery Hill, \$13.95 trade paper (108p) ISBN 978-1-910395-44-8

This multi-story romp is a dungeon crawl with staff management commentary, which is as ridiculous as it sounds and funnier than it should be. Greasy, a yellow anthropomorphized dog with punk hair, wakes up extremely hung over in the bedroom of a medusa/cephalopod warlock, apparently after having had a very good time the night before. So begins Greasy's journey, which is interspersed with her recollections of the recent past spent



plundering a dungeon with rather pitiful monsters. She gains a little wisdom from the Aware Wolves, befriends a teen sphinx who can't riddle,

and has a colossal battle with an armored skeleton; along the way, she learns of all their various complaints against the dungeon's assistant manager, whom she must finally confront to escape. The art styles vary considerably, never veering too close to realism but sharing a similar candy-colored scheme that unifies the look, recalling a group of skilled teens

doodling with the same box of pens. This is demented fun for gamers of all stripes. (*May*)

Kid Gloves:

Nine Months Of Careful Chaos

Lucy Knisley. First Second, \$19.99 trade paper (256p) ISBN 978-1-62672-808-0

This funny and sometimes harrowing memoir, in which Knisley (*Relish*) shares her birth experience, is hampered by an emotionally detached narrative style. The Chicago cartoonist intersperses each chronological step of her pregnancy with cleverly scathing facts about the history of obstetrics as well as the superstitions surrounding giving birth. Knisley shines in those segments, with her didactic narrative voice and clever cartooning solutions being well suited to the material. The stories about her miscarriages, a detailed account of each trimester, and her near-death experience while giving birth are all intense and intimate. However, her art is too clean and cheerful to adequately convey the intensity of these experiences. The artifice of Knisley's narrative style clashes with the raw emotion of her hardships, making it feel as though she's writing about someone else. The book's most affecting moment comes when Knisley's husband relates the story of the near-fatal birth from his point of view. If the book sags when Knisley discusses her own pain, it soars when she offers blunt opinions about the myths she's heard or the insensitive treatment she received. Despite its tonal problems, the book is worth reading for Knisley's fierce wit, strong point of view, and well-paced storytelling. (*Feb.*)

The Prague Coup

Jean-Luc Fromental and Miles Hyman. Titan, \$24.99 (114p) ISBN 978-1-78586-887-0

In this perfect intersection of film noir and espionage fiction, Fromental (*365 Penguins*) imagines what might have happened on Graham Greene's real-life research trip to Vienna and Prague in the winter of 1948, when he was scripting *The Third Man*. His film company tasks Elizabeth Montagu, former actress and ex-spy, to be his guide in the occupied Austrian capital, but she is quick to discover that Greene seems to have more clandestine business than simple filmmaking. Montagu tags along with Greene

to a cabaret/brothel and the rat-infested sewers where adulterated penicillin is sold. Americans, Brits, former Nazis, and Russians play their parts as the scene changes to Prague, a city "overtaken by a slow insurrection," where the action rises to a crescendo. Hyman (*The Black Dablia*) provides artwork reminiscent of detailed woodblock or lino prints in a palette of dim tones to match the atmosphere of the piece. Each image is like an exquisite still life; the panels are devoid of motion individually but convey the action in sequence. This example of art imitating life should captivate lovers of spy fiction or Cold War history. (*Dec.*)

Merry Men

Robert Rodi. Oni, \$19.99 trade paper (152p) ISBN 978-1-62010-547-4

This unremarkable collection of 12 issues puts a queer spin on Robin Hood. With Robin's former lover, King Richard the Lionheart, off on crusade, usurper Prince John and the Bishop of Hereford conspire to outlaw homosexual acts, targeting Richard's supporters and leading Robin and his gay Merry Men to take refuge in the Sherwood Forest. A young woman named Scarlet seeks them out to beg aid in finding her missing friend Daniel. Her presence sparks jealousy between Arthur and Alan, two lovers among the Merry Men, and frustration from others. A gruesome discovery of Daniel's amputated hand lets Robin know they're up against Guy of Gisbourne, an extremely sadistic agent of Prince John's who's allied with the Sheriff of Nottingham. Hunting and confronting him only leads to more crises for the much beleaguered troop. Flashbacks explore the forming and training of the Merry Men amid homophobic violence. Sharply lined characters reminiscent of superhero comics often stand still against solid-color backgrounds, giving the work a somewhat unfinished and text-heavy feel. The art is just short of explicit in its bloody violence and raw eroticism. The work stumbles over somewhat stilted language and arguments over gay identity ("Is Kenneth not a Merry Man? ...How, then, came he by a wife?"). This middling take on the Robin Hood legend will find its most enthusiastic audience among LGBTQ readers. (*Dec.*)

Nonfiction

Macbeth: A Dagger of the Mind

Harold Bloom. Scribner, \$24 (176p)
ISBN 978-1-5011-6425-5

Acclaimed critic Bloom (*How to Read and Why*) once again plumbs the depths of a Shakespeare play to reveal new insights, this time offering a richly detailed character sketch of Macbeth. In a close, scene-by-scene reading, Bloom presents Macbeth as an ambitious visionary driven by a “prophetic imagination,” while leaving death and destruction in his wake. Referring to Macbeth’s vision of the bloody dagger, Bloom frames the character’s too-active imagination as a “dagger of the mind,” and his tragic flaw as the “fantasy-making power” that allows him to easily picture himself as king after hearing the witches’ prophecy. As the play progresses, Bloom finds Macbeth growing ever more frustrated by his failure to achieve his desires, and remarks that it is “difficult not to sympathize with a powerful representation of outrage,” causing the audience to identify with Macbeth despite his crimes. Even Lady Macbeth, as Bloom describes her, possesses a “negative exuberance of shuddering beauty,” though this diminishes after the play’s early scenes as the passion between her and her husband wanes and her own desires become frustrated. As he has so often done, Bloom will shift the reader’s perceptions of a literary classic. (Apr.)

★ The Age of Disenchantments: The Epic Story of Spain’s Most Notorious Literary Family and the Long Shadow of the Spanish Civil War

Aaron Shulman. Ecco, \$29.99 (496p) ISBN 978-0-06-248419-2

In this sweeping, ambitious debut, journalist Shulman offers a group biography of a family indelibly marked by the Spanish Civil War. He begins with the family’s patriarch, Leopoldo Panero, a noted poet who abandoned the left-wing Republicans to defect to the right-wing Nationalists during the war, eventually rising high in General Franco’s regime to assume the role of unofficial poet laureate. Shulman also profiles in depth



In Zaitoun, Yasmin Khan shares such Palestinian recipes as this pudding with apricots and rose water (reviewed on p. 87).

Leopoldo’s wife, Felicidad, who endured their troubled marriage—despite proclaiming that “family is sacred!” Leopoldo had many affairs—through an intense, albeit platonic, relationship with another poet. Of their three sons, the oldest, Juan Luis, sought, with limited success, to assume his father’s role after Leopoldo died in 1962; the middle son, Leopoldo Maria, was arrested after urging people not to vote in a pro-Franco referendum in 1967 and later attempted suicide; while the youngest, Michi, suffered from mental illness. In 1976, the year after Franco’s death, a documentary, *The Disenchantment*, depicted the surviving Paneros grappling with Leopoldo’s legacy; a viewing of the film inspired Shulman to write this book. Prodigiously researched and beautifully written, Shulman’s work reveals a remarkable family of “refreshing weirdness, poetic obsessions, and [a] sacrilegious taste for destruction” as a microcosm of Spain’s tortured 20th century. (Mar.)

The End of the Myth: From the Frontier to the Border Wall in the Mind of America

Greg Grandin. Holt, \$30 (384p) ISBN 978-1-250-17982-1

As New York University historian Grandin observes, President Trump’s aim

of building a wall along the American border with Mexico breaks the nation’s tradition of “fleeing forward” to a supposedly ever-expanding frontier, in the hope of “avoid[ing] a true reckoning with its social problems.” He recounts that, in the 1760s, the British Crown’s refusal to allow white settlers to move across the Appalachian Mountains became one of the many grievances that sparked the American Revolution. As the U.S. became ever more industrial and capitalist, the supposedly empty lands to the west promised prosperity and freedom for poor white men and expansionary opportunities for the sons of Southern planters, as well as new uses for surplus slaves. In the wake of the Civil War, white Americans could look westward to rejuvenate the nation, and some African-Americans created new lives in all-black farming communities isolated from the threat of racism. To

Grandin, Trump’s rhetoric about physically closing the southern border symbolizes the end of centuries of belief that ongoing geographical or trade-based expansion will ensure resources are plentiful enough that “everyone can be free”; without that mind-set, he argues, there’s nowhere in the U.S. for Americans to go to escape the country’s internal problems. This is a deeply polemical work, and should be read as such, but it offers a provocative historical exploration of a contentious current issue. (Mar.)

A Human’s Guide to Machine Intelligence: How Algorithms Are Shaping Our Lives and How We Can Stay in Control

Kartik Hosanagar. Viking, \$27 (272p)
ISBN 978-0-525-56088-3

Hosanagar, a Wharton professor of technology and digital business, attempts, with mixed success, to explain his field to a lay audience impacted by “algorithmic decision-making.” He covers overly familiar terrain to begin with, discussing the increasing role of artificial intelligence in online commerce, social media, and news reporting to demonstrate the topic’s importance. Where he adds value is in using his expertise to discuss how algorithms work, and how the designs of some, such as Amazon and Netflix’s personalization

algorithms, reduce diversity of choice for consumers. The inherent complexity of algorithms, however, presents an obstacle to comprehension that Hosanagar never fully overcomes. In a concluding section, Hosanagar proposes a bill of rights for people affected by algorithms (that is to say, almost everyone), a well-intentioned idea that comes across as impractical. Making accessible to the average person a “description of the data used to train” algorithms and “an explanation regarding the procedures used by the algorithms,” to pick two of his suggestions, would be a daunting task. Nonetheless, Hosanagar deserves credit for valiantly attempting, throughout this thoughtful treatise, to widen understanding of a technology central to modern society. (*Mar.*)

★ The Lady from the Black Lagoon: Hollywood Monsters and the Lost Legacy of Millicent Patrick

Mallory O'Meara. Hanover Square, \$26.99
(336p) ISBN 978-1-335-93780-3

In this captivating and exhaustively researched biography, screenwriter and producer O'Meara chronicles the largely unknown story of artist and actress Milicent Patrick, designer of the monster in the 1954 film *Creature from the Black Lagoon*. O'Meara traces Patrick's journey from precocious art student to her tenure as one of the first female animators at Disney and her discovery by Universal Studios' head of makeup, Bud Westmore. After designing the creature for the hit film and being sent on a whirlwind press tour, Patrick became the target of Westmore's jealousy, was fired, and subsequently was denied credit for her work. O'Meara also shares her own filmmaking experiences in modern-day Hollywood, including being accused of getting a job by sleeping with the boss and being sexually harassed by a voice actor, to highlight the continuing challenges for women in the film industry. These personal anecdotes may initially appear a distraction from Patrick's story, but O'Meara's enthusiasm for her subject soon overcomes all objections. This is a fascinating slice of Hollywood history with a feminist slant, correcting a sexist wrong from decades ago and restoring Patrick to her rightful place of esteem.

Agent: Brady McReynolds, JABberwocky Literary Agency. (Mar.)

[Q&A]

PW TALKS WITH EDWARD HUMES

CSLie?

In *Burned: A True Story of Murder and the Case That Wasn't* (Dutton, Jan.), Humes offers a searing critique of the use of forensic science in criminal trials.

How did you first learn of the murder-by-arson case the book is centered on?

I began spending time at the California Innocence Project so I could observe how an innocence law practice works from the inside. I found the setting and the people fascinating from the start, and Jo Ann Parks's case soon drew me in. I saw in it all the elements of a great true crime tale: a mysterious fatal fire, the horror of being a grieving parent accused of murdering her own children, the original investigators' fear that a stone-cold killer could elude justice, the new evidence that could set Parks free. And combined with all that is a powerful, larger story and context: the justice system's crisis of confidence in forensics.



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lic's imagination by such television franchises as *CSI* have very little real science behind them. Bite mark matching, hair and fiber comparisons, fire pattern analysis, even fingerprint analysis have been shown to be error prone in ways that were long hidden from judges and juries. Regardless of what readers conclude about Parks's

innocence or guilt, I expect most will be shocked and concerned that scientifically dubious forensics have led to many wrongful convictions, bad arrests, and even denial of fire insurance claims that have left thousands of families and businesses in financial ruin.

Why is it that such evidence still makes it to juries?

Judges and the court process itself have proven to be quite inept when it comes to differentiating reliable science from snake oil. A technique or expert can be completely discredited in one case, yet be used to send another person to death row a week later. The legal tests judges use to evaluate a scientific theory or expert are complex and ambiguous. Modern science continually changes and updates itself, but legal precedent can last for decades or centuries. One prominent jurist I quote observes that if judges had their way, the world would still be flat.

—LENNY PICKER

You don't offer an opinion about whether Parks's murder conviction was justified. Why?

I wanted readers of *Burned* to make that call for themselves. My job is to do justice to the story of Jo Ann Parks and her family, the fire that killed her children, and the two arson-murder investigations and trials separated by 28 years and one forensic revolution.

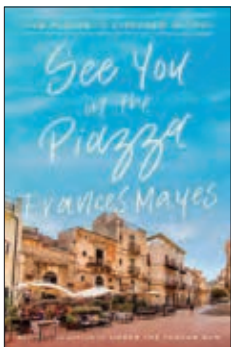
How widespread is the practice of using questionable forensic science in the justice system?

It turns out that many of the forensic science miracles lionized in the pub-

**★ See You in the Piazza:
New Places to Discover in Italy**

Frances Mayes. Crown, \$27 (448p) ISBN 978-0-451-49769-7

Mayes (*Under the Tuscan Sun*) gives a sparkling and irresistible view of Italy in her eighth book, in which she and her husband explore the country from north to south. Mayes begins in Piedmont and ends in Catania, Sicily. Along the way she



treats readers to
“oh-pull-over”
views, looks
inside glorious
churches,
descriptions of
innumerable
meals (in
Sardinia “the
seafood fritto
misto comes to
us hot and crisp,

and the grilled fish under a heap of chopped celery and tomatoes”), and recipes for the dishes they ate (e.g., gnocchi with wild hare from Friuli-Venezia Giulia). Mayes weaves into her narrative historical background (in mid-11th-century Puglia, Frederick II “built castle, mint, treasury and... brought twenty thousand Arab Muslims from Sicily” as troops) and practical travel tips, such as not checking luggage on planes and packing gold-colored sandals (they transform casual to dressy). Mayes has a wonderful eye for detail as she lyrically describes her surroundings, like a river that’s “a long skein in the moonlight, as though a woman has unfurled her silvery gray hair.” Travel, she explains, provides a chance to see life anew and helps form rich memories. Readers will want to take their time, savoring this poetic travelogue like a smooth wine. (*Mar.*)

Gumbo Life: Tales from the Roux Bayou

Ken Wells. Norton, \$26.95 (288p) ISBN 978-0-393-25483-9

Journalist and novelist Wells (*Crawfish Mountain*) serves up a piquant history of gumbo, a quintessential Cajun dish and “the Zen food of an otherwise un-Zenlike culture.” There are few rules about what makes a gumbo a gumbo, and Wells covers myriad origin stories and myths (was it brought by the Acadians or slaves? Or derived from Native American cuisine?

Perhaps all of them?) in arguably too great detail. Once the history, theories, and counter-theories are dispatched, Wells hits his stride and takes readers to, among other places, the annual gumbo cook-off in New Iberia, La., where cooking and copious drinking begin before dawn; a factory that churns out gumbo by the ton for supermarkets; plenty of gumbo-serving restaurants—from neighborhood joints to the esteemed Commander's Palace in New Orleans; and into his family history and, specifically, his mother's kitchen. In Wells's telling, for every cook in Louisiana, there's a different gumbo recipe, and each can only hope to be second best in the world. The best, of course, is mama's. Wells clearly knows his stuff, and his enthusiasm for the region and cuisine is palpable, though he can veer into Rockwell-on-the-bayou style nostalgia overkill. This is required reading for gumbo aficionados and addicts, and those who aspire to be. (Feb.)

Morphing Intelligence: From IQ Measurements to Artificial Brains

**Catherine Malabou, trans. from the French by
Carolyn Shread. Columbia Univ., \$28 (224p)
ISBN 978-0-231-18736-7**

French philosopher Malabou (*Before Tomorrow: Epigenesis and Rationality*) continues to ponder the ever-evolving definition of intelligence at the dawn of AI in a directionless and unprovocative analysis. This slender volume centers on what Malabou dubs the three “metamorphoses” of intelligence throughout recent history, from the innatist view, which prevailed for much of the 20th century, through the era of epigenetics in the 1980s, which demonstrated the role and importance of neuroplasticity, to the present moment, which finds humanity on the cusp of artificial intelligence. Quoting heavily from such thinkers as Michel Foucault and Jean Piaget, she argues that at this moment it must be conceded that human intelligence is no different from artificial intelligence, as “a set of dispositions that are exposed, fragile, open, and contingent in their topological organization and that do not reflect any predestination or plan.” As such, Malabou wonders why serious thinkers do not “give up intelligence as an independent philosophical question.” She hastily outlines some vague ideas for educational

reform, such as the “neurohumanities”—a fusion of the humanities and neuroscience—to accommodate this paradigm shift. But Malabou underdelivers as a philosopher and neuroscientist, providing very little new insight to the topics addressed. (*Feb.*)

No Beast So Fierce: The Terrifying True Story of the Champawat Tiger, the Deadliest Animal in History

Dane Huckelbridge. *Morrow*, \$26.99 (304p)
ISBN 978-0-06-267884-3

Historian Huckelbridge (*The United States of Beer*) showcases his storytelling skills effectively in this suspenseful look at “the most prolific serial killer... the world has ever seen,” a Royal Bengal tiger that purportedly killed more than 400 people in Nepal and India in the early 20th century. The narrative’s dramatic impact is lessened by endemic specula-



tion, including attributing thoughts to the animal itself. The facts require no such embellishment to hold the reader's attention: a single tiger, prevented by a mouth

wound from subsisting on its normal, more agile prey, began hunting people in 1900, kicking off a reign of terror throughout the Himalayan foothills that was ended in 1907 by Jim Corbett, a railway employee and noted hunter retained by the British government to kill the beast. Huckelbridge conducted much of his research using Corbett's own book, and corroboration of many details is lacking; Huckelbridge even presents an epilogue that attempts to validate the Champawat Tiger's body count. He is more convincing, and intriguing, in contending that the bloody episode resulted from the British Empire's "irresponsible forestry tactics, agricultural policies, and hunting practices," and was thus an avoidable disaster. Despite its flaws, this is a gripping page-turner that also conveys broader lessons about humanity's relationship with nature. (*Feb.*)

Hero Dogs: How a Pack of Rescues, Rejects, and Strays Became America's Greatest Disaster-Search Partners

Wilma Melville, with Paul Lobo. St. Martin's, \$28.99 (336p) ISBN 978-1-250-17991-3

Melville, a canine search-and-rescue handler who was inspired to launch the National Disaster Search Dog Foundation (SDF) after volunteering to help look for Oklahoma City bombing survivors in 1995, shares the struggles of establishing and maintaining the organization. She details the rigorous work that goes into preparing the dogs and their handlers, emphasizing her good fortune in meeting with Pluis Davern, the SDF's gifted trainer. Melville doesn't pull any punches, sharing tales of needless infighting among competing search-and-rescue organizations (dog trainers tend to be type-A, since "they're used to being obeyed"), as well as within her own group. The organization made great strides in terms of producing highly trained animals, but struggled to attract support until 9/11 showed the necessity of its work. Melville skillfully recounts how the dogs assisted with the nail-biting search for survivors in lower Manhattan's vast wreckage. That experience, for both animals and handlers, became crucial when Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005, and then when an earthquake leveled Haiti in 2010. It makes for a harrowing, often heart-breaking, yet inspirational tale as Melville eloquently explores the small victories and wrenching losses of the dogs' much-needed work. *Agent: Elizabeth Winick Rubinstein, McIntosh & Otis. (Jan.)*

★ How to Date Men When You Hate Men

Blythe Roberson. Flatiron, \$19.99 (224p) ISBN 978-1-250-19342-1

Roberson, a researcher at the *Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, looks through a millennial lens at modern love in this laugh-out-loud commentary on dating and her lack of success at it. Peppering her narrative with references to sociological studies and quotes from literature (on unrequited love, for instance, she looks to Walt Whitman: "I loved a person ardently, and my love was not/returned"), Roberson emphasizes her main point that dating is equally painstaking endeavor and joyful venture. She lays it all out on the table—

[Q&A]

PW TALKS WITH MICHAEL MEWSHAW

All About Pat Conroy

In *The Lost Prince: A Search for Pat Conroy* (Counterpoint, Mar.), Mewshaw explores a close but fraught bond with the late author of *The Great Santini*.

How did you come up with the title?

The title alludes to *The Prince of Tides*, and to Pat and how he was lost to me after our falling out. As he grew more famous, he also seemed increasingly lost to himself. I wanted to show how he was at the beginning.

Before his death, Pat asked you to write this book. Do you think you would have written it without his urging?

I doubt it. Even after Pat extended me a written invitation, there were Conroy friends and family members who refused to be interviewed for the book. I feared pushback from his fans and perhaps some critics.

But it gave me confidence to go on knowing I had not just Pat's permission but his encouragement.

What do you feel distinguished your friendship with Pat from other relationships?

I've never known anyone, even in my family, with whom I had so much in common. Irish Catholics from homes troubled by alcoholism and abuse, we survived our childhoods through basketball and a love of books. It emerged that during [Conroy's] father's Marine Corps deployment at the Pentagon, my stepfather, who ran the Anacostia Naval Receiving Station laundry, washed the Conroy family's clothes.

As Pat put it, "Connections don't come much more intimate than that."

You don't sugarcoat Pat's or your own flaws. How important and how difficult was it to look that deeply?

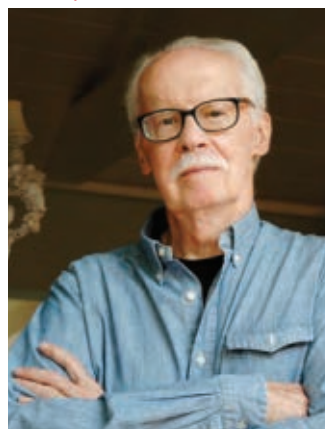
At the end of his life, Pat publicly declared that he wanted to be remembered and written about "warts and all." He insisted his life was an open

book, and that his archive at the University of South Carolina should be accessible to all. Rather than make the memoirist's and biographer's task easier, this required a delicate balancing of my deep affection for Pat with an obligation to be candid about what I discovered in my research. Of all my books, this one was by far the most painful to complete.

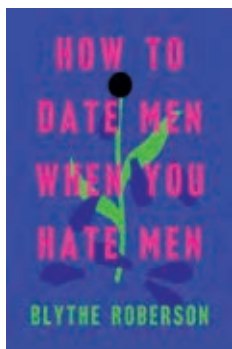
Our review called the book a love story. Would you agree with that?

Yes, *The Lost Prince* is a love story. But like a lot of the most moving ones, it doesn't have an entirely happy ending. Ours burned bright for 14 years. Then the embers smoldered for the next 20 years. What made Pat's absence bearable and prevented me from giving up was the role he allowed me to play in his reconciliation with his daughter Susannah. Through her, my god-daughter, the love story lives on.

—RONA WILK



© SEAN MEWSHAW



including a list of men who she believed to be flirting with her, but later found out, in one example with a guy who liked all her tweets, that he was “just on my phone a lot”

checking Twitter. Mixed in with the amusing anecdotes are thoughtful observations on the classic pitfalls of dating—like the fallacy of the “you deserve better than me” breakup line or the misogynistic connotations behind being told that love will come “when you least expect it.” This is a perfect book for women of all ages who have found that, despite their best efforts, dating men rarely works out in their favor. (Jan.)

Queen Victoria:

Daughter, Wife, Mother, Widow

Lucy Worsley. St. Martin's, \$32.50 (432p)

ISBN 978-1-250-20142-3

The latest from historian Worsley (*Jane Austen at Home*) is an insightful, sympathetic, and vividly written examination of the “good woman” who ruled England for 64 years. Worsley argues that the new role Victoria created for the monarchy, one that relied more on influence than power,



stemmed from her ability to cultivate the people's respect despite their unease with a woman on the throne, which she did by relying on instinct and emotion to

guide her decisions, as her culture expected women to do, rather than the logic and intellect culturally associated with men. When she inherited the throne in 1837, she immediately distanced herself from her controlling mother, choosing her own advisers. Victoria kept the word *obey* in her 1840 marriage vows to Prince Albert, and she struggled to reconcile her public role as queen with her private one

as wife; once she became a mother, she ceded government and family business to Albert. Widowed in 1861, it took a decade and the near death of her eldest son before Victoria adjusted to ruling on her own again, which she did for another 40 years. Worsley's command of the material and elegant writing style make this a must-read for anyone interested in the British monarchy. Illus. (Jan.)

The Restless Kings:

Henry II, His Sons and the Wars for the Plantagenet Crown

Nick Barratt. Faber & Faber, \$33 (320p)

ISBN 978-0-571-32910-6

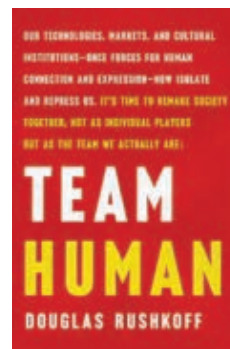
Medieval fiscal historian Barratt argues that in the 12th and early 13th centuries, the highly contentious British royal family oversaw the foundation for the British bureaucratic system, including the Magna Carta, which helped shape much of the modern Western world. During this period, Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine schemed with and against each other and their four surviving sons, Henry, Geoffrey, Richard the Lionheart, and the incompetent John. Henry's long reign garners the most attention, with an especially clear account of his disastrous power struggle and falling-out with Thomas Becket, the archbishop of Canterbury; the resulting assertion of papal authority over the English crown remained until the 16th-century English Reformation. Barratt's moniker of “restless” certainly fits, but the subtitle's reference to kings neglects the significantly influential Plantagenet women noted in the text. Scholarly and well written, Barratt's history serves up operatic action punctuated with wry comments. Between the bickering and bloodshed, Barratt's focus on a remarkable royal branch, which used its fondness for familial warfare to make substantial continental acquisitions, yields a fascinating tale. (Jan.)

Team Human

Douglas Rushkoff. Norton, \$23.95 (256p)

ISBN 978-0-393-65169-0

Digital technology is destroying social bonds with wide-ranging and dire consequences, according to this scattershot jeremiad. Rushkoff (*Program or Be Programmed*), a professor of media theory and host of NPR's *Team Human* podcast,



argues that the internet and social media are enacting a “social annihilation” that leaves individuals isolated, alienated, addicted to screens, vulnerable to consumerist propaganda,

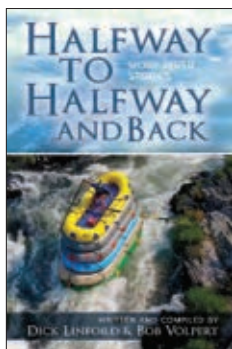
and imbued with a computer-flavored worldview that makes them “experience people as dehumanized replications of memes” and “treat one another as machines.” These notions, along with anti-capitalist posturing, frame a disjointed rehash of leftist sociocultural concerns, from the looming robot takeover to the inauthenticity of digital sound compared to vinyl. Rushkoff's theorizing is more free-associative metaphor than serious analysis—he contends that “politicians of the digital media environment pull out of global trade blocs and demand the construction of walls” because of the one-versus-zero character of binary computer code—and yields claims about the real world that are often ill-informed or just plain absurd (“We will need a major, civilization-changing innovation to occur on a monthly or even weekly basis in order to support the rate of growth demanded by the underlying [capitalist economy's] operating system”). People seeking a more connected, sustainable future should look for a better game plan than Rushkoff's screed. (Jan.)

★ Halfway to Halfway and Back: More River Stories

Edited by Dick Linford and Bob Volpert.

Halfway Publishing, \$19.95 trade paper (318p) ISBN 978-0-692-13625-6

With this second assortment of stories about river guiding in the U.S. and the people who do it for a living, Linford and Volpert deliver a raucous and delightful collection. The editors have a rare talent for picking stories with opening sentences that capture the reader's attention instantly (“I suppose the goats might have been an omen”; “We were both naked”). What nearly every selection also does is create quick but lingering character sketches that convey the guides' resilience, flair



in love with this unique avocation, and some, like both Linford and Volpert, had children who grew up to also pursue lives on the river. Not every story is light-hearted—there are a few sad ones, too, such as a tribute to a friend and fellow guide who, afflicted by PTSD from his service in the Vietnam War, died by suicide. There's also a brief look at how, with some difficulty, women were gradually accepted as river guides. Every story in the book is well worth one—or two—thoughtful reads. (*BookLife*)

Lifestyle

Food & Drink

★ Zaitoun: Recipes from the Palestinian Kitchen

Yasmin Khan. Norton, \$29.95 (256p)
ISBN 978-1-32400-262-8

Food writer Khan (*The Saffron Tales*) celebrates the vibrant flavors of Palestinian cuisine in this excellent new work. She provides a marvelous array of mazzeh (Palestinian mezze), including different varieties of hummus and falafel, as well as asparagus with eggs and za'atar, and spinach and feta parcels. Salads, a staple in the Palestinian diet, are unfussy, with such offerings as fattoush and tabbouleh. Soups—including a roast pumpkin, sage, and maftool soup and a lentil soup with walnut and cilantro paste—are tantalizing, rich, and comforting. Main course dishes include roasted eggplant with spiced chickpeas and tomatoes; a spicy shrimp and tomato stew; and lemon, cumin, and green chili sea bass. Desserts are also superb; there's a pomegranate passion cake and banana and tahini ice cream with date syrup. Khan also provides a helpful list of pantry staples to keep on hand (dried fruit, nuts, yogurt, za'atar). Throughout,

for innovation, and “relentless pursuit of laughter.” Many contributors joined the river life “almost by accident,” often starting with a summer job. Many found partners equally

she includes photos of Palestinian people and landscapes, giving the reader a deeper and welcome glimpse into life there. (Palestinians, for instance, are urged not to buy herbs grown in Israeli settlements in the West Bank, as it “gives the settlements a sense of viability and permanence.”) Khan's cookbook is a thoroughly enjoyable exploration of the region's food and culture. (*Feb.*)

Keto Cooking with Your Instant Pot

Karen S. Lee. Page Street, \$21.99 (192p)
ISBN 978-1-62414-697-8

Lee (*Paleo Cooking with Your Air Fryer*) offers 75 low-carb, high-fat recipes tailored to use both the slow- and pressure-cooking abilities of the Instant Pot. One of Lee's keys to keto is substituting vegetables for grains. So, there are zucchini noodles in a bowl of pho, and florets of cauliflower that fill in for the macaroni in lobster mac and cheese. Her variation on granola is simply a mix of nuts, seeds, and coconut chips slow-cooked for two and a half hours; a curious noodle-free lasagna, while definitely hearty, is served as a stew of layered cheese and beef sauce. In several of the entries, the Instant Pot requires an



assist: for the standing herb-crusted prime rib roast, the meat needs to be seared in the oven, while the Texas-style barbecue baby back ribs are broiled first. Stews and meat dishes are the book's centerpiece, with international options ranging from ratatouille to spicy Korean chicken stew. Standouts amid the 22 meat entrees include Mongolian beef and easy beef bourguignon. If not exactly instant, these meals are global in scope and thrive under pressure. (*Jan.*)

Great Vegan Meals for the Carnivorous Family

Amanda Logan. Page Street, \$21.99 (176p)
ISBN 978-1-62414-670-1

Meat-eaters needn't be apprehensive about trying vegan recipes from food blogger Logan's excellent debut cookbook. Whether one wants to introduce addi-

tional vegetables to a diet or transition to a vegan lifestyle, Logan provides an array of ways to successfully feed families vegan dishes. Tasty breakfast options include eggless french toast, roasted pear parfaits, and chocolate baked oats with blistered berries; for meals on the go, there are no-sausage rolls with rosemary and chestnut mushrooms, and cheesy vegetable muffins made with vegan parmesan. For the vegans looking to branch out from more traditional fare, Logan offers a dairy-free milk and vegan butter béchamel-based lasagna that includes lentils, red wine, fresh sage, ; a tofu katsu burger crusted in panko; and an inventive watermelon sushi. Logan offers those new to vegan eating some easy dishes such as a pot pie made with oyster mushrooms, dairy-free stovetop mac and cheese (made with cauliflower, white beans, and vegan butter), and chocolate brownies. More complex but equally satisfying meals include Chinese takeout noodles with cubes of creamy tofu, cauliflower fried rice with kimchi, and vegan miso-butter roasted vegetables. This is a reliable, family-friendly entry point for those looking to explore the vegan diet or expand their culinary repertoire. (*Dec.*)

Korean Paleo: 80 Bold-Flavored, Gluten-and-Grain-Free Recipes

Jean Choi. Page Street, \$21.99 (192p)
ISBN 978-1-62414-633-6

Choi, a nutritional therapist and founder of the *What Great Grandma Ate* blog, shares flavorful and creative Korean paleo recipes. Korean food, she writes, is rich with fresh vegetables and meats, and relies on traditional preservation methods like pickling—all of which translates easily to the protein-heavy, low-carb paleo diet with just a few tweaks. Hers are straightforward, traditional dishes: bulgogi, galbi (barbecued short ribs), bibimbap, japchae (stir-fried sweet potato noodles), spicy barbecue pork, and bossam—boiled pork belly wrapped in cabbage and topped with kimchi. Choi calls for a few low-carb substitutions, such as cauliflower sticky rice to serve with doenjang-beef stew and using cassava flour and tapioca starch for making dumpling wrappers for a mandu guk soup. Home cooks will eagerly dig into sweet and spicy shrimp and ginseng

chicken soup, and will likely find the labor-intensive spicy Korean ramen with spiralized sweet potatoes (acting as stand-ins for the typical noodles) to be worth the effort. Choi's crispy zucchini pancakes, meanwhile, are a terrific way to include veggies for kids. Choi advises keeping on hand homemade doenjang, gochujang (chili paste), and kimchi, but most recipes come together fairly quickly once the prep is done. This is a terrific and flavorful addition to the ever-expanding paleo/Whole30 library. (Dec.)

★ **Pastry School: 100 Step-by-Step Recipes**

Chefs at Le Cordon Bleu. Grub Street, \$59.95 (512p) ISBN 978-1-91162-120-1

The chefs at Le Cordon Bleu cooking school distill their baking expertise into this comprehensive collection of exquisite recipes coupled with succinct instruction. The book includes 85 confections along with recipes for 15 key preparations for French pastries. Recipes span the classics, but also include modern creations, and all recipes include illustrated step-by-step instructions to guide cooks through the entire process. Each recipe lists times for preparation, baking, chilling, freezing, and cooling; a difficulty rating; and details on how long the item can be stored. Each component in the finished products has its own ingredient list, including decorations, and a note of necessary equipment. The school offers mouth-watering recipes for cakes (Black Forest gateau), pastries (chocolate and raspberry eclairs), tarts (rhubarb and saffron), and cookies. Mango fruit jellies and soft-centered chocolate fondants are on the easier end of the spectrum, while chocolate tonka bean-and-berry prestige and tropical fruit tart with raspberries are more complex. Chocolate and blackcurrant domes, apricot shortbread biscuits, and fig tartlets with sugared almonds round out the volume. This is a stellar array of confectionery options for home bakers of any level. (Nov.)



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Plant-Based Meats: Hearty, High-Protein Recipes for Vegans, Flexatarians, and Curious Carnivores

Robin Asbell. Countryman, \$23.95 (192p) ISBN 978-1-68268-221-0

Opening with a strong, persuasive argument for going meatless without getting into the weeds of food politics or a debate about vegan vs. vegetarian diets, cooking teacher Asbell (*Great Bowls of Food*) does a fine job of making meatless meals approachable and enticing: "The biggest myth is that you can't get protein without animal-based foods," Asbell writes. "Forget that. Protein is in everything from spinach to bananas." Asbell shows how vegan versions of hot dogs (made with tofu, carrots, and miso paste), hamburgers (with seitan and wheat gluten), baloney (firm tofu, beet powder), empanadas, and bulgogi ribs (wheat gluten and yeast) can be just as flavorful and satisfying as the real thing. Asbell provides plenty of recipes that can be prepared in an hour or less and with ingredients that can be easily found. While meatless pepperoni and bacon formed from king trumpet mushrooms might be best reserved for weekend cooking, walnut cauliflower beef for tacos, a mushroom paté, and seitan Kung Pao stir fry are ready in half an hour. Asbell's surprisingly doable recipes are perfect for those interested in creating meaty-feeling meals with vegetables. (Nov.)

Crafts & Hobbies

30 Knit Ponchos and Capes

Rita Maassen, trans. from the German by Katharina Sokiran. Stackpole, \$22.95 trade paper (112p) ISBN 978-0-8117-3709-8

Knitwear designer Maassen presents a beautiful collection of patterns capable of inspiring experienced and advanced knitters to take their work to new levels. She features 30 designs deploying lace, cables, colorwork, bell sleeves, and other design techniques that most will find challenging but rewarding. For the experienced knitter, this book is a treasure trove of appealing ideas for one of fashion's trendiest looks. Examples include intricate lacework in the Ava pattern, cable work for the "delicate and romantic" Mila, and Fair Isle work on the afghan-like Smilla requiring four colors, two different types of needles, and six buttons. Almost all of the patterns require circular or double-pointed needles, sometimes with several sets needed to complete one item. For example, the button-down Jaina cape requires three different sizes of circular needle, a cable needle, and a spare needle to complete the project. Others, such as the Melina and Luna, require multiple strands of different colored yarns knitted into intricate Fair Isle patterns. However, skilled knitters looking for a rewarding challenge will want to pick up this collection of runway-ready stylish garments. (Feb.)

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String Frenzy: Strips, Strings and Scrappy Things! 12 More String Quilting Projects

Bonnie K. Hunter. C&T, \$27.95 (96p) ISBN 978-1-61745-732-6

Hunter (*Addicted to Scraps*) gives new meaning to the concept of leftovers with this smart, savvy crafter's guide to using scrap materials to piece together beautiful quilts. "Too insignificant for clothing construction, too tiny for household linens—these were the bits destined for the trash bin," Hunter remarks about her choice of materials. Noting that quilters are a resourceful group, she writes that the foundations (the beginning material on which quilt pieces are built) used for string piecing can include muslin, printed cotton, batiste, lawn, sheet music, church bulletins, newspaper, and family letters. Hunter recommends paper foundations, as sewing straight strips of fabric across the bias of a fabric foundation can cause warping and rolling and a foundation that won't lay flat. "Paper is sturdy in every direction, having no bias," she counsels. With the basics out of the way, Hunter's easy-to-understand, step-by-step instructions demonstrate how to construct such beautiful designs as Crumb Jumble and Emerald City. Short on fluff and long on useful information, this slim volume offers abundant, well-stated advice for creating unique heirloom quilts. (Dec.)

Home & Garden

The Gardener Says: Quotes, Quips, and Words of Wisdom

Edited by Nina Pick. Princeton Architectural Press, \$15.95 (160p) ISBN 978-1-61689-776-5

Assembling quotes from a wide variety of gardeners, including writers, philosophers, and former First Lady Michelle Obama, Pick's anthology provides a light reading experience that can be started on

any page at any time. Some quotes are short and sweet, like Thoreau's "I have great faith in a seed," and C.Z. Guest's "Without flowers, I'd find life very dismal." Others are more thought-provoking, such as Beverly Nichols's quip that the flowers in her garden "are in their present places because they have personally informed me, in the clearest possible tones, that this is where they wish to be." The quotes speak to the patience required of a gardener, to the beauty of planting and nourishing a living thing, and to the healing, soothing qualities a garden delivers to its caretaker. "Earth has no sorrow that earth cannot heal," states John Muir, while Mahatma Gandhi reflects that "to forget how to dig the earth and tend the soil is to forget ourselves." Filled with humor, reflection, and a love of plants and planting, this breezy collection may just remind horticulturalists why they seek and find solace in their gardens. (*Feb.*)

The Inspired Houseplant: Transform Your Home with Indoor Plants from Kokedama to Terrariums and Water Gardens to Edibles

Jen Stearns. *Sasquatch*, \$24.95 (208p)
ISBN 978-1-63217-177-1

This book will transform the mind-sets and, by extension, the surroundings of people who worry that their ministrations are murderous to houseplants. Gardener and entrepreneur Stearns, who owns a plant store in greater Seattle, proves the perfect coach for the houseplant-challenged. Her simple 101-style guide discusses the basics of potting, watering, pruning, and feeding, and wisely sticks to the basics, selecting and organizing into groups plants that will reward beginners. Those same neophytes may find challenging a number of the plant projects she offers. Enthusiastic DIY types will have the staple gun needed for the Living Herb Frame; the less well-equipped may want to stick to something simpler, like thumbtacking philodendron vines in graceful patterns on a wall. Beautiful photography of lush, plant-filled spaces convincingly makes Stearns's points. First-time homeowners or new apartment dwellers who long for green but lack confidence in their plant-tending abilities will be greatly helped by this volume. (Feb.)

**The Martha Manual:
How to Do (Almost) Everything**
Martha Stewart. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt,
\$35 (400p) ISBN 978-1-328-92732-3

Lifestyle maven Stewart (*Martha's Flowers*) offers an easy-to-navigate and attractive guidebook covering a wide array of topics, from organizing the entrance to one's home to traveling with pets. The book addresses common and several not-so-common how-to questions (" 'how-to' could be my middle name," she writes) and is—not surprisingly—exceedingly well-organized. The dozen major sections address how to "Organize," "Fix and Maintain," "Refresh and Embellish" (e.g., by re-covering a chair), "Clean," "Launder," "Craft and Create" (embroidering a pillow), "Garden and Grow," "Host and Entertain," "Enjoy" (hanging a hammock or practicing sun salutations), "Cook," "Celebrate" (birthdays, etc.) and "Care for Pets." Accompanying visuals further clarify the instructions: for example, readers will find diagrams on how to fold "oddball fitted sheets" for neat placement in a linen closet; the utilitarian "how to fix toilets" section includes a rudimentary "anatomy of a toilet" diagram—as well as the warning, "don't panic." "Martha Must" comments throughout amplify Stewart's personal touch, evoking a cozy yet pragmatic mind-set (keep a basket of nonskid socks by the entrance for visitors as part of a no-shoe policy). Visually appealing and packed with inspiring ideas and lucid instructions, this delightfully useful manual will be a shoe-in for inclusion in any Stewart fan's home library. (*Jan.*)

Parenting

The New Childhood: Raising Kids to Thrive in a Connected World

Jordan Shapiro. Little, Brown Spark, \$28
(320p) ISBN 978-0-316-43724-0

Shapiro, a coordinator of child development research at Sesame Workshop, presents a well-formulated, deeply insightful point of view on the place of technology in raising kids. Avoiding being either a Luddite or technology cheerleader, Shapiro explains that adults must still take responsibility for guiding child cognitive and social development, despite their possible discomfort at the

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FICTION

Arkad's World *James L. Cambias*. Baen, ISBN 978-1-4814-8370-4, Jan.

The Storm *David Drake*. Baen, ISBN 978-1-4814-8369-8, Jan.

Best Gay Erotica of the Year, Vol. 4, edited by Rob Rosen. Cleis, ISBN 978-1-62778-284-5, Dec.

Best Lesbian Erotica of the Year, Vol. 3,
edited by Sacchi Green. Cleis, ISBN 978-1-62778-
286-9, Dec.

Rough Trade *Sidney Bell*. Carina, ISBN 978-1-335-77711-9, Dec.

★ **Ten Kisses to Scandal** *Vivienne Lorret*. Avon, ISBN 978-0-06-268550-6, Dec.

The Bead Collector *Sefi Atta*. Interlink, ISBN 978-1-62371-985-2, Nov.

The Highlander Who Protected Me *Vanessa Kelly*. Zebra, ISBN 978-1-4201-4115-3, Nov.

★ **The Lady Travelers Guide to Deception With an Unlikely Earl** *Victoria Alexander*. HQN, ISBN 978-0-373-80406-1, Nov.

★ **The Fall of Gondolin** *J.R.R. Tolkien, edited by Christopher Tolkien, illus. by Alan Lee.* Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, ISBN 978-1-328-61304-2, Aug.

“multidirectional, nonlinear intersection” of modern childhood and the digital world. His analysis places early-21st-century tools in the context of older concepts, showing how the game *Minecraft* promotes imaginative play and peer connection just as playing outside does, or how virtual locations can meaningfully and healthily provide public spaces. Shapiro works backward as well as forward, diving into the cultural history of older modes to show how they are not timeless but grounded in outdated ideas; notably, he argues the monastery-based model of school bells and quiet desks no longer matches the diversified attention required by modern workplaces. He admonishes parents and educators not to give technology “autonomy and credit,” but to treat it as a helpful tool. Placing modern child-rearing in the context of the long story of human cultural adaptation, this manual makes the challenges of screens more approachable, and the adult role in meeting them clearer. (*Dec.*)

heart that is closed/ can still open again." Fences, stains, and quiet whispers become metaphors for feelings. Accepting companionship heals and helps children grow: "Closed or open... I get to decide," the book finishes, with a spread of a smiling girl, arms thrown wide. Flashes of brilliant yellow illuminate smudgy black-and-white drawings, and heart forms can be found everywhere, in ironwork, tiny seedlings, and stars. The abstract nature of Luyken's meditation will draw readers receptive to thoughtful examination; others may be left puzzled. Ages 4–8. (*Jan.*)

Under My Hijab

Hena Khan, illus. by Aaliya Jaleel. Lee & Low, \$17.95 (32p) ISBN 978-1-62014-792-4

The narrator, a Muslim girl, has many impressive women in her life: her grandmother is a baker, her mother is a doctor, her cousin Iman excels at karate. In public, each of these women wears a hijab in a style that's as individual as they are; at home or with other women or girls, they uncover their heads, and their chosen hairstyles are equally expressive. When the girl's aunt, an artist, works in her public studio, "her silky hijab towers up high,/ pinned with a handmade jewel." But when Auntie is in her own home with the narrator, she shows off an edgy haircut and pink and purple dye. Simple rhyming text by Khan (*Amina's Voice*) is a bit on the nose ("Jenna's our fearless troop leader./ She makes us the gooiest s'mores!/ Her hijab is topped with a sun hat/ whenever we hike outdoors"), and debuting illustrator Jaleel matches this straightforward approach with lifelike tableaux. But their matter-of-fact approach accomplishes what it sets out to do: celebrate the diversity and autonomy of contemporary Muslim women. Ages 4–8. *Author's agent: Matthew Elblonk, DeFiore & Co. (Feb.)*

Fiction

Best Family Ever

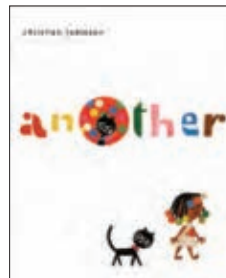
Karen Kingsbury and Tyler Russell. S&S/ Wiseman, \$17.99 (288p) ISBN 978-1-5344-1215-6

With her son, bestselling Christian author Kingsbury adapts her bestselling Baxter Family series for adults to suit a younger audience, bringing readers stories

★ Another

Christian Robinson. Atheneum, \$17.99 (56p) ISBN 978-1-5344-2167-7

Caldecott Honor artist Robinson's wordless solo debut opens in the middle of the night, when a brown-skinned girl with beaded braids is woken by a disturbance: a black cat that looks just like hers slinks through a glowing hole in her bedroom wall, takes her cat's mouse toy, and exits. As she and her cat follow, spot illustrations on white spreads show the two in a topsy-turvy journey through portals, over a conveyor belt and Escher-like stairs, and into a ball pit. Eventually, they arrive at a place where children of many ethnicities and appearances play. Each child has "another," readers see—a double, a twin. Soon, the girl and her cat meet their own doubles, who enter upside down on the opposite page. The girl's similar returns the toy and the two part happily, order restored. Simple geometric shapes and expanses of empty space make the spreads easy to consider, and Robinson nails the pacing, using each page turn for a comic or conceptual beat. Almost all children wonder whether there are others exactly like them somewhere out in the universe, doing the same thing at exactly the same time. By playing with that idea while juxtaposing similarity and difference, Robinson creates an almost mystical Droste effect of a story that is all mirrors and windows for the group of various children who are offered portals to reach one another. He also creates a speculative world with its own logic, and an adventure that will both puzzle and amuse. Ages 4–8. *Agent: Steven Malk, Writers House. (Mar.)*



of the five Baxter siblings in childhood. Narrated by middle sisters Ashley, 10, and Kari, 11, the slice-of-life story begins in Ann Arbor, Mich., just before Valentine's Day. Exuberant Ashley is thrilled to be organizing her class's party. Kari, meanwhile, is dreading the holiday—her classmate has a crush on her, and she's concerned that his attentions will result in an embarrassing situation. The girls share their joys and concerns with their family because, as their mother always says, "Your very best friends are the ones around the dinner table each night." After Valentine's Day, Ashley feels left out on a family vacation and wonders if she should be more like older sister Brooke, who excels at math. And the whole family struggles with their father's announcement that they will move at the end of the school year for his new job. The Baxters pray and find solace in God while navigating relatable and realistic life changes in this slice-of-life tale. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Rick Christian, Alive Literary Agency. (Feb.)*

★ Dragon Pearl

Yoon Ha Lee. Disney-Hyperion/Riordan, \$16.99 (320p) ISBN 978-1-368-01335-2

In this highly original novel by Lee (the *Machineries of Empire* series for adults), 13-year-old Min must venture to the stars of the Thousand Worlds in order to find her older brother, Jun, who is suspected of deserting the Space Forces to search for the legendary Dragon Pearl. Min's quick wits and technical prowess come in handy, but it's her abilities as one of the fox people to shape-shift and charm others that prove vital after she leaves her home planet of Jinju aboard the freighter *Red Azalea*. When her brother's former ship rescues the vessel from mercenaries, she poses as slain cadet Bae Jang, promising his ghost that she will avenge his death in exchange for impersonating him on the ship. Disguised as the dead cadet, Min is able to continue both quests, enlisting the aid of two of Bae's friends—female dragon Haneul and nonbinary goblin Sujin—all the while avoiding the scrutiny of Captain Hwan as the ship heads to the Ghost Sector, the probable location of the Dragon Pearl. Lee offers a perfect balance of space opera and

continued on p. 94

IN GOOD FAITH

Books celebrate the gifts of world religions.

Loved: The Lord's Prayer

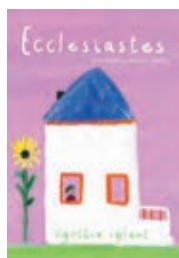
Sally Lloyd-Jones, illus. by Jago. Zonderkidz, \$9.99 (20p) ISBN 978-0-310-75761-0

Lloyd-Jones's padded board book contains a gentle adaptation of the Lord's Prayer. Diverse children play together in a verdant seaside meadow, reciting a quiet prayer to God: "Hello Daddy!/ We want to know you./ And be close to you./ Please show us how." They climb a hill, step through wildflowers, and traverse a fallen log in single file. They request God's attention and care ("make everything in the world right again./ And in our hearts too") and forgiveness "for doing wrong or hurting you." Two friends are pictured in a disagreement, then forgiving one another. The play day concludes at twilight, as they return home to a welcoming house. Lloyd-Jones's sincere verse (which first appeared in the *Jesus Storybook Bible*) and Jago's cozy, child-centered art sends an assuring, down-to-earth message about God's love. Ages up to 4. (*Sept.*)

Ecclesiastes: To Everything There Is a Season

Cynthia Rylant. Beach Lane, \$17.99 (40p) ISBN 978-1-4814-7654-6

In a companion to *Creation* and *Nativity*, Rylant offers a stirring picture book rendering of Ecclesiastes. Each portrait-



oriented spread includes a single phrase from the psalm, presented with spare, brightly colored acrylics in a naïf style. One image shows a child figure reaching into a planter box ("a time to plant"), then bringing flowers to an elderly woman: "and a time to pluck up that/ which has been planted." Elsewhere, family members wave goodbye to one

another, a broad distance already seeming to expand between them ("a time to weep"). In the following spread, they reunite: "and a time to laugh." Through her childlike images, Rylant conveys the emotional rawness of the cherished verse. Ages up to 8. (*Sept.*)

First Words in the Bible

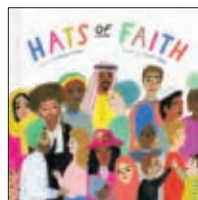
Ideals, \$9.99 (20p) ISBN 978-1-945470-71-4

This padded board book introduces basic vocabulary words loosely associated with Bible stories, along with a small selection of biblical passages. Cartoon scenes present the stories of God's creation, Noah's Ark, Jonah, and the birth of Jesus. Following each of the scenes based on the stories, are sections that clearly label and identify colors, foods, animals, "things to wear," and objects found "around the house" and "on the farm." Though the relationship between the story scenes and the listed objects is sometimes unclear, readers will gain familiarity with biblical icons. Ages 1–3. (*Sept.*)

Hats of Faith

Medeia Cohan, illus. by Sarah Walsh. Chronicle, \$9.99 (12p) ISBN 978-1-4521-7320-7

This inclusive board book familiarizes readers with religious headpieces: "many religious people share the custom of covering their heads to show their love for God." Walsh's thick and



painterly portraits represent figures from diverse religious backgrounds—a Muslim woman wears a pink hijab; a Rastafarian man wears a hat knit with red, yellow, and green; an Orthodox Jewish woman wears a floral-patterned *tichel*; and a South Asian Muslim man

dresses in a *topi*. Soothing, jewel-toned backgrounds contribute warmth to the representations of gentle, smiling figures. They appear all together on a final spread, a visual representation of the story's underlying message: "learning about each other makes it easy to be more understanding. Being understanding helps us spread love and peace." Ages 2–4. (*Aug.*)

My First Book of Prayers

Illus. by Gillian Flint. Worthy, \$6.99 (20p) ISBN 978-0-8249-1683-1

Ten simple prayers accompany tranquil images of children outdoors and in cozy indoor scenes. A toddler and two older girls exuberantly play a xylophone, tambourine, and recorder, while a prayer reads "thank you, God, for all your gifts;/ thank you for your graces./ Thank you for your loving care/ about us in all places." A boy and girl stand by a flowing river: "Thank you for the fish that swim;/ I really like to look at them./ Thank you for the birds that sing./ Thank you, Lord, for everything." An image of a child in blue star pajamas closes out this tender collection: "Now I lay me down to sleep/ I pray the Lord my soul to keep." Ages 2–5. (*Sept.*)

Lift-the-Flap Bible Stories for Young Children

Andrew J. DeYoung and Naomi Joy Kreuger, illus. by Megan Higgins. Beaming Books, \$12.99 (16p) ISBN 978-1-5064-4684-4

In a sturdy board book, DeYoung and Kreuger stage familiar stories of Noah's Ark, David and Goliath, Jesus's birth, the Resurrection, and others. Passages offer simplified descriptions: "A big crowd of people came to see Jesus one day. But they didn't have anything to eat! And they were getting hungry. Jesus had a plan." Higgins has a light, appealing art style, with jewel-toned buildings, kind human and animal figures, and playful visual textures. Liftable flaps contribute dimension to the scenes, revealing surprise images and additional story passages. A welcoming introduction to biblical tales. Ages 2–6. (*Sept.*)

When I Pray for You

Matthew Paul Turner, illus. by Kimberly Barnes. Waterbrook, \$11.99 (48p) ISBN 978-0-525-65058-4

A mother with wide, emerald eyes cradles her blanketed infant: "from the moment I saw you,/ I started to pray./ Big prayers and small ones/ I have sent God's way." As the child grows from a baby to a girl, the mother is encouraging yet watchful: "I pray you grow strong, have passion and fight./ And stand up for what's good with all of your might." Barnes's ebullient artwork shows the child at a pool party, reading to her peers in a book nook, and playing in a band. A final spread shows that the child has not yet grown up; instead, the mother holds her baby on a hilltop under a gentle sky, projecting a life to come. New moms will welcome the wistful tone and scenes of a child's joyful discoveries. Ages 3–7. (Feb.)

The World Needs Beautiful Things

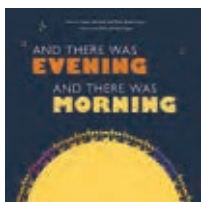
Leah Rachel Berkowitz, illus. by Daniele Fabbri. Kar-Ben, \$17.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-5124-4448-3

The humble protagonist in this allegorical story is based on Bezalel, who, in the book of Exodus, is selected by God to design the ark. Bezalel—whom Fabbri renders with bushy eyebrows, lively curls, and an expression of sheer wonder—is a collector of discarded objects, insisting that "each of these things is beautiful in its own way, and the world needs beautiful things." After being freed by the Pharaoh, Bezalel and the Israelites leave Egypt, crossing the Red Sea and desert. When God requests that the Israelites make a house made of "beautiful things," God is struck by Bezalel's sense for beauty. Fabbri's paintings—featuring a sweeping desert landscape, motifs of fire and water, and statuesque figures in trailing robes—enrich Berkowitz's story of a lesser-known biblical character. Ages 3–8. (Oct.)

★ And There Was Evening, and There Was Morning

Ellen Zahan Zager and Harriet Cohen Helfand, illus. by Zager. Kar-Ben, \$17.99 (24p) ISBN 978-1-5124-8364-2

Zager and Helfand tell the creation story from the book of Genesis in the Torah. Rhyming couplets describe the acts of creation throughout six days, beginning with words set against pitch darkness: "The world began when God said 'light,'/ And changed the world from dark to bright./ Dark in the night and light in the day,/ Our beautiful world was underway." Zager's dynamic illustrations utilize Hebrew letters (as well as some English letters, punctuation marks, and shapes) to create the objects appearing in each scene—they form the

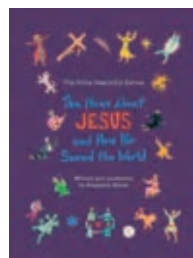


sun, moon, and stars created by God on the fourth day, and the shapes of bears, horses, and lions on the sixth day. Zager brings uncommon artistry to the proverbial story, inviting readers to peer more closely. Ages 3–8. (Oct.)

The News About Jesus and How He Saved the World

Benjamin Morse. Orson & Co., \$30 (80p) ISBN 978-0-9858135-2-9

Morse's second title in the Bible Beautiful series takes an inventive approach to the New Testament. Events in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus are recounted in



"Good News Daily," a fictionalized newspaper. Morse includes condensed tellings of the gospels, the acts and letters of the apostles, and the vision of John of Patmos, which are conveyed through abstract word-and-collage montages crafted from paper, fabric, ribbon, and other ephemera.

Snappy headlines summarize pivotal events: "Trouble in Jerusalem" leads into an account from Matthew 26, in which "Jesus warned his disciples that his time on earth was coming to an end." Morse's frequently abstract compositions integrate rich patterns, contrasting colors, and moments that feel both stationary and fluid. While the newspaper concept is an effective organizational tool, it's outshone by the alluring visuals, which provide an imagistic understanding of the layered stories. Ages 4–7. (Oct.)

Who Believes What?

Exploring the World's Major Religions

Anna Wills and Nora Tomm, trans. from the German by Shelley Tanaka. Owl Kids, \$19.95 (40p) ISBN 978-1-77147-333-0

In a frank, lively, and informative guide to the world's religions, Wills and Tomm explore the central tenets of Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. For each faith, the text covers its history, origins, and



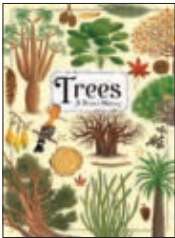
system of belief, and accompanying vibrant, wordless pages are busily filled with the religion's iconic structures, symbolic objects, and practitioners in moments of worship or celebration. Spreads that resemble flowcharts identify many of the items from the illustrations, describing their significance within each faith (and offering a fun seek-and-find element): "In Buddhism, the dragon possesses special powers and stands for rebirth, change, and renewal." It's a hearty celebration of belief and tradition around the globe. Ages 7–10. (Sept.)

HOUSE OF LEAVES

Four books focus on the lives and legends of trees and plants.

★ Trees: A Rooted History

Piotr Socha, illus. by Wojciech Grajkowski. Abrams, \$24.99 (80p)
ISBN 978-1-4197-3723-7



This expansive volume takes a holistic approach to the topic of trees in nature, history, and the imagination, moving from strictly botanical content into tangential topics. The oversize spreads identify and compare tree species and tree-dwelling animals; substantive sidebars accompany each section. An illustration of tree rings places human history into perspective: “During the lifetime of this one tree, the Olmec, Aztec, and Maya civilizations blossomed and died out.” Spreads explore human uses for wood, show a fictionalized family tree, and depict tree monsters within mythology and literature. Grajkowski’s illustration style vacillates between naturalistic and playful; humans have exaggerated, cartoonish features, while trees and insects resemble specimens from vintage natural history tomes. Through the multiangled perspective, Socha and Grajkowski subtly allude to the way that branches of knowledge cross-pollinate and interconnect. All ages. (Apr.)

Bamboo and Me:

Exploring Bamboo's Many Uses in Daily Life

Xu Bin, illus. by Yuan Yahuan. Tuttle, \$16.95 (42p) ISBN 978-1-60220-454-6

In this bilingual story told in English and Chinese, a child describes the ways that his family uses bamboo after harvesting it. They feed bamboo skin to the cows and prepare “delicious dried bamboo shoots,” which the family later enjoys on “Chinese New Year’s eve.” They also use sections of bamboo to catch flowing water and to make a broom and dustpan and baskets—items that the family sells at a market. The boy, though, dreams of a present that he will find in the bamboo forest—a premonition that comes true as he uses bamboo sticks to craft the frame for a fish kite. Yahuan has a soft art style that captures the gentle, dim light of a bamboo forest. Through a warm depiction of a family’s day-to-day life, Bin demonstrates the versatility

of a single resource. Ages 4–8. (*Oct.*)

Perfectly Peculiar Plants

Chris Thorogood, illus. by Catell Ronca. Words & Pictures, \$17.95
(64p) ISBN 978-1-78603-286-7

Thorogood introduces 28 species of extraordinary plants. Many of the colorful names match their unique attributes, including the tree shew toilet pitcher, which obtains nutrients from tree shrew droppings, and the dead horse arum, which has hair-covered blooms and “smells like a rotten animal!” Less stinky plants include the queen of the night cactus, with “very beautiful flowers which open only at night.” Informative sections address plant communication, plant and animal coexistence, and protecting plants, among other topics, while Ronca’s textural collage-style art provides flashy colors and up-close perspectives on the subjects. From coconuts to vampire plants, readers will be struck by the range of biodiversity—and strangeness—within the botanical world. Ages 5–8. (*Sept.*)

The Universe Is a Tree

Laura Filippucci. Creative Editions, \$18.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-56846-304-9

This thoughtful celebration of trees explores their mythological, biological, and spiritual significance, devoting each page to an idea and a tree species that supports it (and sharing a quotation for and information about each). Yew trees serve as “gates to the beyond” in Norse stories of Yggdrasil, a tree with roots that “[extend] to different realms.” Trees can also be “givers”—the baobab “provides food, medicine, water, and precious shade”—while the olive tree has long represented wisdom and peace. In Filippucci’s ornate watercolor-and-ink art, the trees are cavernous, imposing, and divine (the face of the Buddha peers from the gnarled trunk of the banyan tree), emphasizing how they have nurtured myths, legends, and the well-being of humans and animals throughout time. Ages 12–up. (*Sept.*)



continued from p. 91

Korean mythology with enough complexity to appeal to teens. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Jennifer Jackson, Donald Maass Literary Agency. (Jan.)*

Good Enough

Jen Petro-Roy. *Feiwei and Friends*, \$16.99
(272p) ISBN 978-1-250-12351-0

Twelve-year-old Riley chronicles her two-month stay in the hospital, where she is being treated for anorexia. Before her hospitalization, Riley felt secondary to her

perfect gymnast younger sister, and after a mean girl mocks Riley as “overweight” following a school BMI testing, a voice inside her, which Riley dubs “Ed” (short for “eating disorder”), tells her that she needs to eat less and lose weight. Riley struggles against the voice with the help of her therapist, Willow, as well as the girls in her therapy group; her roommate, Ali, meanwhile, secretly does crunches at night to stay thin and challenges Riley to join her. Riley is

initially desperate not to gain weight, but she slowly faces her past and finds the strength to believe the healthy voice telling her to take care of herself. Petro-Roy (*P.S. I Miss You*), an eating disorder survivor, offers an intimate and realistic portrayal of Riley's destructive thinking patterns as well as her victories and setbacks. A powerful, well-told, and authentic story. Ages 8–12.

Agent: Brianne Johnson, Writers House. (Feb.)

"The Kindle Unlimited page reads give me a full third of my writing income—and for many indies, it's well over half."

What Fiction Decline?

An indie author finds his fiction selling very well at Amazon

BY HARRY BINGHAM



In America and Britain, fiction is said to be in decline. *PW* recently called attention to the 16% (or \$830 million) decline in the sales of adult fiction reported by the Association of American Publishers during the 2013–2017 period. In Britain, the Publishers Association reports a slightly larger drop over a similar period. These are figures you'd associate with a product in long-term decline: landlines in a mobile age, horses in the age of Ford.

Of course, there's a problem with the data here: Where are the self-publishers? Where are Amazon's own imprints? But more broadly, and speaking as a novelist, I can't help feeling that these AAP numbers simply don't reflect what's happening with readers. (And, as an author with extensive experience with both self-publishing and traditional publishing, I'm able to speak from both sides of the curtain.)

The fact is that nothing at all in my interactions with readers makes me feel like I'm selling horses to car owners. Indeed, if my email inbox is anything to go by, I'm selling horses to people who really, really like horses. The appetite for good, absorbing, well-written fiction feels to me as intense now as it ever did.

Nor do most of those "fiction in decline" theories make sense to me. For sure, Netflix has upended the business model of traditional TV companies over the past few years, but a cop show is still a cop show. Who cares about business models? There may, admittedly, be a generational

shift in play, but a generational shift would play out over 20 years, not five.

For me, there are other factors at work—and the common thread is that corporate publishing is asked to simultaneously ride two trains running on ever-diverging tracks.

The first issue is that the bricks-and-mortar industry is simply not as supportive of old-school brand building as it once was. Its long-serving captain, Barnes & Noble, is too enfeebled; the independents are too scattered; the supermarkets just don't care. Huge standalone bestseller successes are still possible, but building a brand has never been harder.

Amazon is the exact opposite. It doesn't, in a way, know what to do with standalone books by debut authors or authors whose previous sales were relatively modest. Without sales data, Amazon doesn't know how to market a book, so its tools work much better with series fiction and authors who work hard to instill series loyalty.

Then there's pricing. Competent indie authors will price the first books of their series at pretty much nothing: either "permafree" or a giveaway 99¢. But no sane indie author would price that first book at \$11.99. Why make it hard for readers to get into a series? The first book is merely bait; the rest of the series is where the money lies.

That logic has driven plenty of indie careers, including mine, but its hopelessness as a strategy for print books is obvious. And how do you sell full-priced

print if you're offering the same thing at next to nothing in e-form?

Next there's marketing. The bricks-and-mortar world loves media splash, whether that's *Fifty Shades* or *Go Set a Watchman*. Those things will drive online sales, too, but

online-only authors work hard with mailing lists and online ads and deploy those tools in the context of a supportive series pricing structure. An industry focusing on traditional publicity—and pricing for print—can't use those other tools as intensively or as successfully.

Last, there's Kindle Unlimited. Data Guy (a man who analyzes Amazon data) estimates KU to be as big, roughly, as all non-Amazon e-tailers combined. Like an increasing number of indies today, I've got all my books, bar the first in the series, exclusive to Amazon. The Kindle Unlimited page reads give me a full third of my writing income (the vast majority of which comes from e-books)—and for many indies, it's well over half. How can a traditional publisher fight that? What beats free? (And sure, quality is always good, but my own work has been kindly reviewed in numerous publications, including this one. The traditional industry no longer has a lock on quality.)

There's a dark message in this, but also a bright one. The dark one is that the publishing industry has its work cut out—but that's hardly news. The bright one is that readers still read and fiction still compels. The art form we love is migrating, perhaps, but not mutating in any deep way.

Fiction in decline? Not from my point of view. Fiction's doing just fine. ■

Harry Bingham is the author of the Fiona Griffiths series and runs Jericho Writers, an online writers club.

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praise for the author

To figure out who killed their
husband, a first and second
wife must work together ...
or die trying.

2/26/19

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telegraphic,
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reminiscent of
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well suited to
the stark realities
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on *Promised Virgins*

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Money is pouring in.
Buildings are going up.
But someone is killing
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