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JUNE 11, 2018

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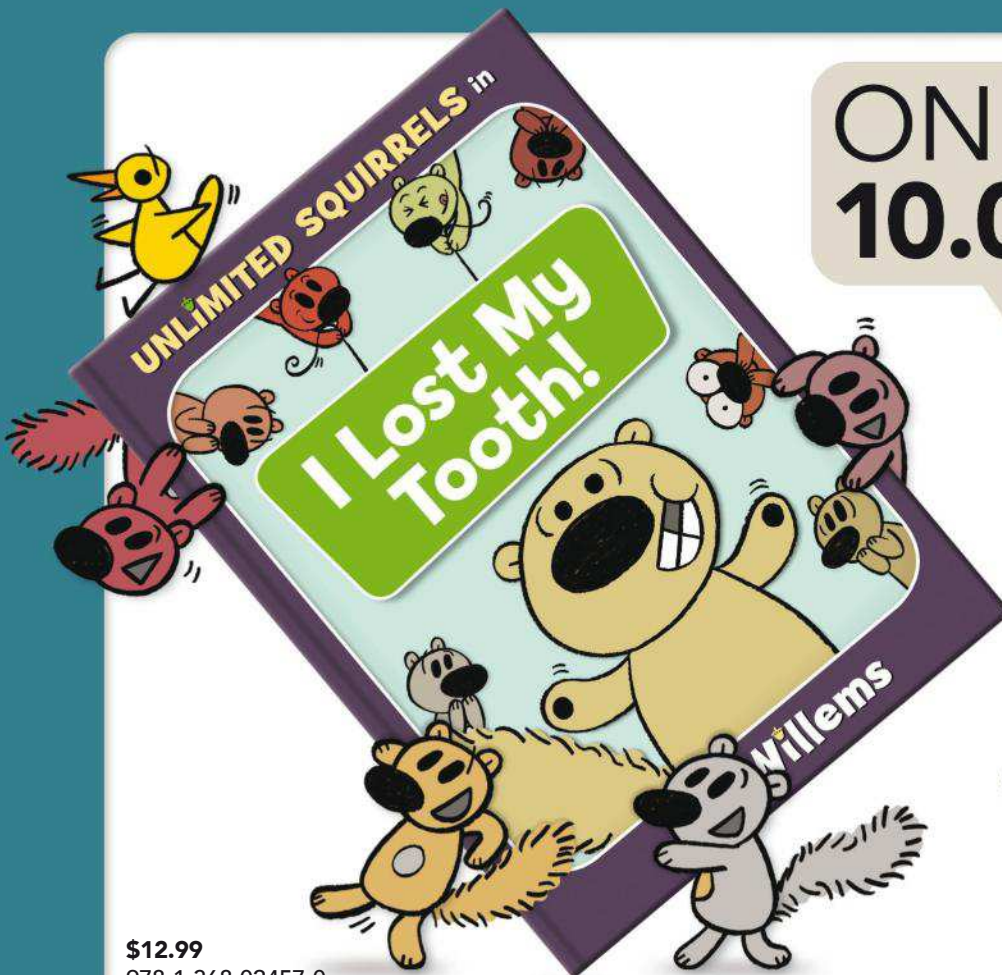


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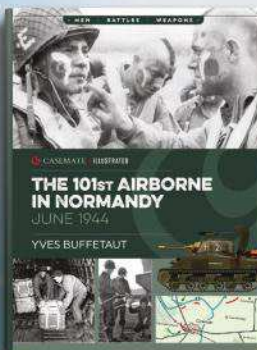
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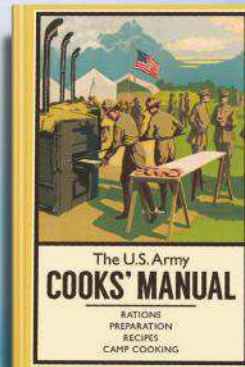
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Summer Activities & ADVENTURES



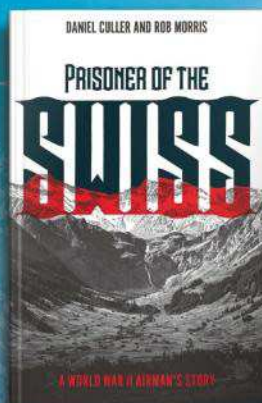
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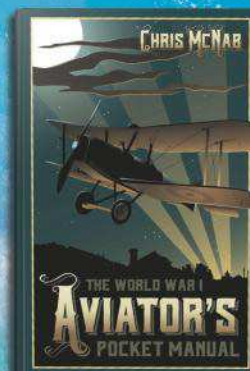
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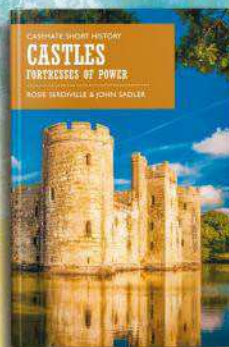
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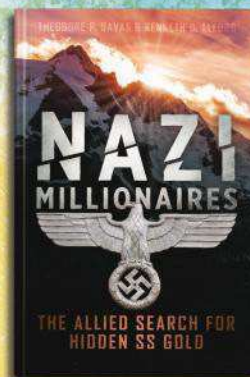
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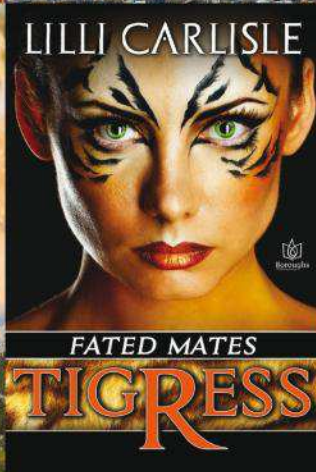
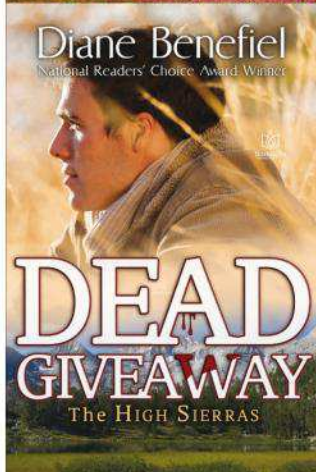
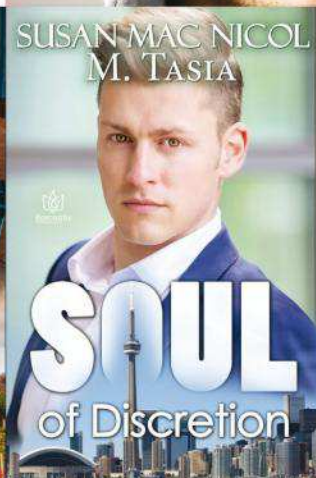
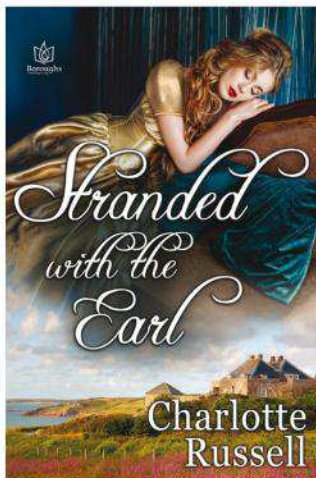
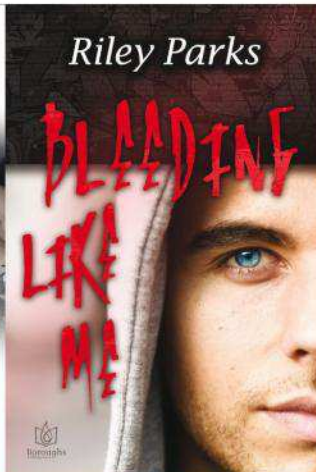
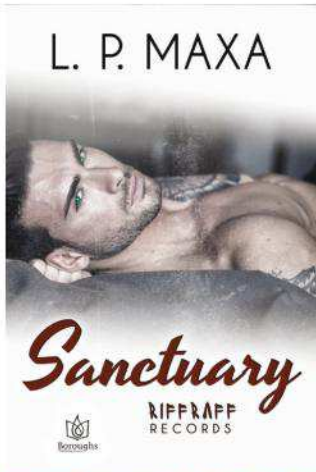
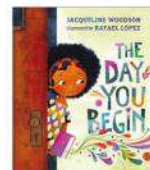
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Q&A with
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Boxed Review
The Day You Begin

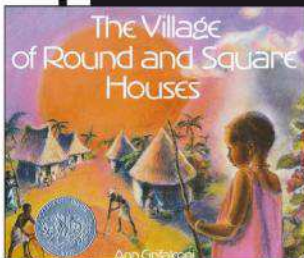


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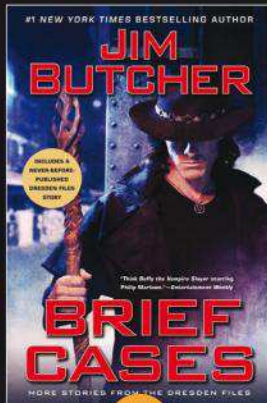
LAST WEEK'S TOP REVIEWS

LAST WEEK, THE MOST-READ REVIEWS ON PUBLISHERSWEEKLY.COM WERE...



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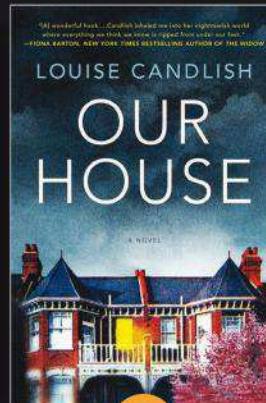
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brief](http://publishersweekly.com/brief)



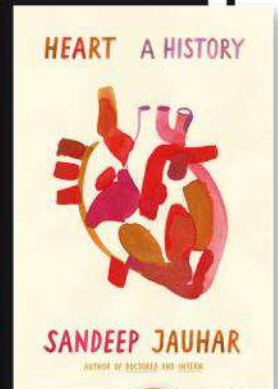
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#5

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heart](http://publishersweekly.com/heart)

From the Newsletters

Tip Sheet

Michelle Tea, author of *Against Memoir*, picks 10 essential books about contemporary queer life in America.

publishersweekly.com/michelletea

Children's Bookshelf



Kate Morgan Jackson, associate publisher of HarperCollins Children's Books, will be retiring on June 29, after 26 years with the company.

[publishersweekly.com/
katemorganjackson](http://publishersweekly.com/katemorganjackson)

BookLife Report

Jane Friedman, former publisher of *Writer's Digest*, explains how to network better by saying less.

[publishersweekly.com/
janefriedman](http://publishersweekly.com/janefriedman)

Podcasts

Week Ahead

PW senior writer Andrew Albanese discusses

the rough start to Bill Clinton's book tour.

publishersweekly.com/weekahead

More to Come

On a visit to BookExpo and BookCon, Heidi MacDonald talks with Ezra Clayton Daniels about his award-winning graphic novel *Upgrade Soul* and to Dean Haspiel about *The Red Hook*, his new collection of the webcomic of the same name.

publishersweekly.com/moreto come

FaithCast

Angela Hunt and Bill Myers discuss their new book, *When God Happens: True Stories of Modern Day Miracles*, along with audiobook narrator Jim Denison.

publishersweekly.com/whengodhappens

Blogs

ShelfTalker

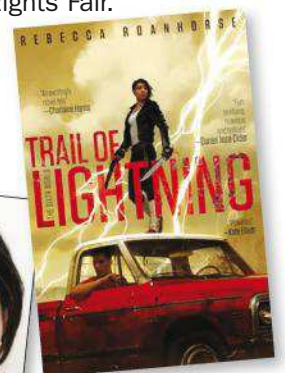
A bookstore owner reflects on the joys of summer.



publishersweekly.com/joysofsummer

PW Radio

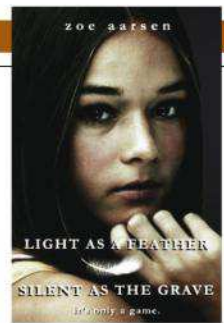
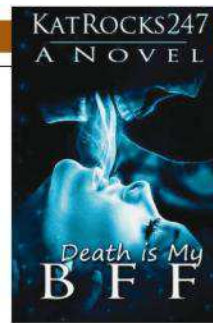
Rebecca Roanhorse discusses her debut novel, *Trail of Lightning*. And PW editorial director Jim Milliot recaps BookExpo, BookCon, and the New York Rights Fair.



publishersweekly.com/pwradio281

Community Writing Sites Draw Hollywood Attention

In their search for material, producers are forging new relationships with online platforms



Over the past few weeks, Sony Pictures Television optioned *Death Is My BFF* by Katarina E. Tonks and Hulu ordered a series based on *Light as a Feather* by Zoe Aarsen. Both stories originated on Wattpad, a writing community with 65 million readers and writers. Instead of adapting untested material, these studios optioned stories with proven track records. On Wattpad, Tonks's work had earned more than 92 million views and Aarsen's story had counted 2.9 million views, and both received thousands of comments from dedicated readers.

Wattpad has become such a treasure trove for Hollywood that the site inked a partnership with United Talent Agency in 2015. The relationship has yielded both deals and marketing partnerships for Wattpad, but it also helps UTA quickly react to Hollywood trends. "We're always providing [studios] with different stories we see spiking," said Ashleigh Gardner, the head of partnerships at Wattpad Studios. "But sometimes a certain studio will be looking for a hot new fantasy project, and we put together some of the best stories on Wattpad that are a potential fit."

The two new Wattpad deals are another indication of the increasing attention Hollywood producers are giving to different crowdfunding sites and online writing communities for material. Besides the recent Wattpad agreements, author Tal M. Klein inked a seven-figure deal for *The Punch Escrow*, a science fiction novel that originated on the crowdfunded publishing site InkShares.

Kickstarter is another community site that has captured Hollywood's eye. Late last year, the Russo Brothers Studio (helmed by the directors of *Avengers: Infinity War*) outbid other players for rights to *The Electric State*, an illustrated novel from Swedish artist Simon Stålenhag. The book began as a Kickstarter project with more than 5,000 backers pledging over \$350,000 total to publish the book. Atria's Skybound Books imprint will release an edition of the title in September.

Felipe Cagno is a Brazilian comic book writer who has created 12 successful Kickstarter campaigns for his comics and graphic novels. A producer from Brazil's Muiraquitã Filmes contacted him when he raised nearly \$9,000 from about 300 Kickstarter readers to fund his graphic novel *Too Good to Be True*. That project is now in development. "It's a great testing stage for a

story," Cagno said, explaining why producers see value in his Kickstarter-proven stories. "Compared to film, comic books are fast and cheap to produce. You can try out ideas at a fraction of the cost of a short film."

InkShares operates with a model that falls in between Wattpad and Kickstarter. On the site, aspiring authors publish drafts of potential book projects. These writers set goals for preorders and then work to collect enough pledges to meet their preorder ambitions. If a book exceed its preorder threshold, the InkShares team will publish it.

More than 7,000 projects have been drafted by aspiring authors on the site, and 99 books have been published under InkShares' unique system. In addition to Klein's movie deal for his *The Punch Escrow*, the horror studio Crypt TV partnered with InkShares, using the platform to discover up-and-coming horror talent to create short videos for its mobile audience. The studio hosted a writing challenge on the site, choosing three InkShares projects to publish under the Crypt TV banner.

Crypt TV has also built a relationship with the NoSleep horror writing community on Reddit. "At Reddit, there's no barrier to entry," said Crypt TV CEO and founder Jack Davis, explaining why these communities have continued to interest his team. Crypt TV has posted work on the site and brought NoSleep writers to develop videos. Crypt producers seek material that can be used across multiple short videos such as the studio's Look-See series, which is about a mysterious specter. Fans discuss the origins and motivations of the creature on social media.

"There are two key things that set a writer apart," Davis said, highlighting details that appeal to filmmakers on community sites. "Can we take great visuals from this story? And is this a story that lends itself to a mythology, so that fans want to dive deeper?"

The WritingPrompts community on Reddit counts 12 million subscribers, up from 2.7 million three years ago. More than 30 WritingPrompt responses have already been adapted into short films by independent creators. "Traditional media doesn't really fully grasp the internet even now," said Ryan Andrew Kinder, the founder of WritingPrompts. "They view people on Reddit as amateurs, even though there's a wealth of talent out there that they could tap—a lot of people who know what people want to read!"

—Jason Boog

Moving Forward

New York Rights Fair, BookExpo Sign Partnership Agreement

The organizers of the New York Rights Fair and BookExpo have announced



a multiyear partnership for joint management of the fair. Launched this year, NYRF took place May 30–June 1 concurrently with BookExpo and operated under a joint marketing agreement between the two events. The new agreement will increase BookExpo organizer Reed Exhibitions' involvement with NYRF as part of an overall effort to enhance the publisher, agent, and author experience at both NYRF and BookExpo.

As part of their efforts to improve the ties between NYRF and BookExpo, organizers of both events are currently surveying this year's participants to ascertain the strengths of each as well as future opportunities for improvement and growth. After analyzing the survey results, BookExpo and NYRF will determine the 2019 structure of NYRF, as well as its location. Those details are expected to be released later this month.

"The New York Rights Fair is the perfect complement to BookExpo in that both are shaping and reshaping the U.S. publishing landscape," said Ed Several, senior v-p of Reed Exhibitions. "Rights are important; retail is important. Working together, we can go forward to continue to expand the industry and the opportunities associated with it."

NYRF was created by BolognaFiere, *Publishers Weekly*, and the Combined Book Exhibit. The first fair was held at the Metropolitan Pavilion, near BookExpo's home at New York City's Javits Center, and attracted exhibitors and agents from 19 countries, as well as approximately 3,000 visitors, including those who came from BookExpo.

"This multiyear partnership agreement with BookExpo ensures that the New York Rights Fair, with New York City as its home for the foreseeable future, continues to grow and to serve the international rights community," said George Slowik Jr., president of NYRF and co-owner of *Publishers Weekly*.

"Bringing together the international community was the core mission, and we accomplished that in year one of NYRF," noted Marco Momoli, commercial director of BolognaFiere. "Now we build upon that initial success with a trusted partner that is well respected by the U.S. publishing industry."

Jon Malinowski, president of CBE, agreed that the 2018 NYRF created a solid foundation for the future. "NYRF this year was a starting point," he said. "From here, we can only grow. With the new partnership with BookExpo, together we benefit from each other's experience and expertise." —J.M.

The Weekly Scorecard

Soft Fiction Sales Continue Into June

Unit sales of print books fell 2% in the week ended June 3, 2018, compared to the similar week in 2017, at outlets that report to NDP BookScan. For the third week in a row, it was softness in the fiction categories that led to the decline. Unit sales dropped 5% in both the adult and juvenile fiction categories compared to the week ended June 4, 2017. In adult fiction, Stephen King's *The Outsider* remained in first place on the category bestseller list, selling nearly 52,000 copies. Seven of the top 10 bestselling titles in the category were new books, with *Shelter in Place* by Nora Roberts at #2, selling more than 41,000 copies, while Christine Feehan's mass market paperback *Shadow Keeper* was third, selling almost 21,000 copies. Overall, the top 100 adult fiction titles sold 100,000 fewer copies in the week ended June 3, 2018, than in the similar week last year. The 5% decline in juvenile fiction was also largely due to weakness among the top 100 bestsellers and not because of the release of a blockbuster title last year. Sales were particularly soft among young adult fiction titles, where sales of the top 100 books fell 29% in the week compared to 2017. In 2018, Victoria Aveyard's *War Storm* was the top young adult fiction title, selling almost 7,000 copies, while a year ago Nicola Yoon's *Everything, Everything* was #1 in young adult, selling more than 21,000 copies. Print unit sales rose by less than 1% in adult nonfiction over 2017. The category had a new #1 bestseller with *Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes*, a D&D guide, in the top spot, selling more than 35,000 copies in its first week on sale. Another new book, *Calypso* by David Sedaris, landed in the third spot with over 21,000 copies sold.

UNIT SALES OF PRINT BOOKS BY CHANNEL (IN THOUSANDS)

	JUN. 4, 2017	JUN. 3, 2018	CHGE WEEK	CHGE YTD
Total	11,667	11,415	-2%	2%
Retail & Club	10,214	10,012	-2%	3%
Mass Merch./Others	1,423	1,404	-3%	-0.4%

UNIT SALES OF PRINT BOOKS BY CATEGORY (IN THOUSANDS)

	JUN. 4, 2017	JUN. 3, 2018	CHGE WEEK	CHGE YTD
Adult Nonfiction	4,608	4,638	0.7%	4%
Adult Fiction	2,712	2,575	-5%	-4%
Juvenile Nonfiction	1,036	1,070	3%	7%
Juvenile Fiction	3,022	2,855	-5%	3%

UNIT SALES OF PRINT BOOKS BY FORMAT (IN THOUSANDS)

	JUN. 4, 2016	JUN. 3, 2017	CHGE WEEK	CHGE YTD
Hardcover	3,077	3,086	0.3%	7%
Trade Paperback	6,721	6,491	-3%	-0.4%
Mass Market Paperback	1,116	1,084	-3%	-3%
Board Books	481	501	4%	10%
Audio	57	40	-30%	-26%



SOURCE: NPD BOOKSCAN AND PUBLISHERS WEEKLY. NPD'S U.S. CONSUMER MARKET PANEL COVERS APPROXIMATELY 80% OF THE PRINT BOOK MARKET AND CONTINUES TO GROW.

Indie Publishing

Godine Relaunches Dubus with Support of Authors

David R. Godine, Publisher has more than 500 titles in print, including works by celebrated authors whose careers have taken decades to bear fruit, such as Nobel laureates J.M.G. Le Clézio and Patrick Modiano. Yet in the nearly half-century of the Boston-based house's existence, it hasn't relaunched a book—until now.

Godine is reissuing the works of Andre Dubus with the publication of three short story collections: *We Don't Live Here Anymore* (June), *The Winter Father* (June), and *The Cross Country Runner* (Sept.). The collections, which feature writings by Dubus from 1966 to his death in 1999, have reset interiors and new cover art. The third volume also includes stories previously published only in periodicals. In addition, each book has an introduction, written by authors Ann Beattie, Richard Russo, and Tobias Wolff, respectively.

The project is the brainchild of Joshua Bodwell, who runs the Maine Writers & Publishers Alliance. In 2016, Bodwell took note of the relaunching of a number of writers—including Lucia Berlin, James Salter, and Joy Williams—whose writing, he said, “had been languishing in certain ways.”

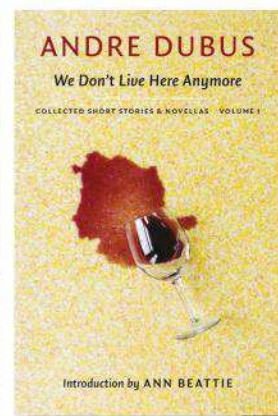
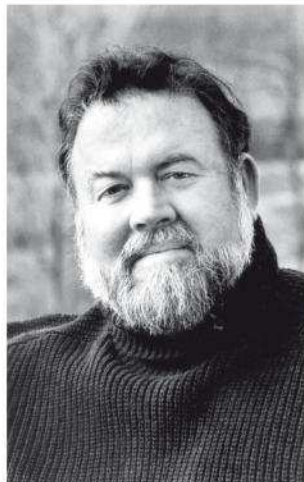
“I realized that the last repackaging of Dubus had been many years ago,” Bodwell said. Though Dubus's sales have

been steady and he has a devoted readership among MFA teachers and students, he has had little in the way of a general audience. As a longtime reader of Godine books, Bodwell had profiled the press for a feature in *Poets & Writers* in 2005 and knew of its long-standing relationship with Dubus.

Bodwell, who wrote a 2008 piece entitled “The Art of Reading Andre Dubus,” decided to approach publisher David Godine with the idea of reissuing Dubus. “The time is perfect, given all these writer's writers having moments,” he told Godine, who agreed.

Godine first read Dubus in 1974, when agent Phillip Spitzer handed him a copy of *Separate Flights* in a brown paper bag over lunch in New York City. Godine read it all night, and he called Spitzer the following morning and acquired the manuscript outright.

Dubus, who would only pen a handful of longer works in his career, “thought it was something of a miracle that anyone would buy the book without the promise of a novel forthcoming,” Godine said. Dubus published with the press for the rest of his life, even when more lucrative offers from large publishers were on the table.



“Dubus was so anomalous,” Godine said. “He was really from the South. He took the Louisiana part of his life and what he spoke to was the Northeast experience. Thirty years before Boston became a city on steroids, these towns were dying,” he added, speaking of the New England river and mill towns that feature heavily in Dubus's writings. “You saw that. You read a story like ‘The Fat Girl’ and you really heard the dialect of Haverhill and the North Shore and connected it with a universal humanity and with a real sympathy, especially for women.”

George Gibson, executive editor at Grove, was with Godine from 1974 to 1985 and knew Dubus well, attending

WIZARDS OF THE COAST OUT-OF-PRINT NOTIFICATION

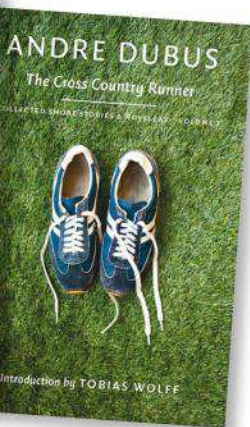
Wizards of the Coast has declared a list of titles Out-of-Print.
These titles may be returned for full credit within the next 180 days.

The complete list is available at:

dnd.wizards.com/articles/news/2018-out-of-print-declarations-list

Returns for these titles must be received by December 31, 2018

every Red Sox opening day with him for years. When Bodwell started his work to relaunch Dubus's writing, Godine put him in touch with Gibson so that the latter could share his experiences of knowing and working with Dubus.



"It's thrilling to see," Gibson said, noting that new readers will encounter a uniqueness in Dubus. "There's an enormous humanity in his characters. They are every man, every person, every woman. They are enormously human. They're very real—painfully so at times. They reveal all of their foibles and weaknesses in powerful ways. I think Andre is truly one of the great writers of the latter half of the 20th century. He's one of the

finest short story writers we've ever had."

In reissuing the books, Bodwell found a welcoming community of writers at the ready to support his effort, beginning with Dubus's son, the novelist Andre Dubus III, who Bodwell said was "incredibly helpful" in securing and organizing the material. All three authors who were asked to write introductions said yes right away, as did a cadre of writers who were asked to provide blurbs, including Molly Antopol, Richard Ford, Peter Orner, and Elizabeth Strout.

That community of writers is an extension of the one that Dubus cultivated in his lifetime, Godine noted, recalling the 1987 fund-raiser that was arranged to help pay Dubus's medical bills after he was hit by a car while attempting to help two injured motorists outside of Boston. In four nights of readings in Cambridge, Mass., authors including Beattie, E.L. Doctorow, John

Irving, Gail Godwin, Stephen King, John Updike, Kurt Vonnegut, and Richard Yates raised \$86,000 for Dubus.

To promote the reissues, Godine has arranged for Beattie's introduction to appear in the *Paris Review*, and Richard Russo's will be published in the *New Yorker*. In addition, the publisher is hosting a June 20 launch for the book at the Brattle Theater in Cambridge, where filmmaker Todd Field will screen *In the Bedroom*, which is based on the story "Killings" by Dubus, followed by a q&a. For booksellers, the publisher is offering a free copy to each bookstore that buys six copies or more of the new editions.

As he prepares to reissue the books, Godine reflected on his long history with Dubus. "If we are a success with an author, we don't [usually] hold on to that author for very long. We kept Andre because Andre insisted on it."

—Alex Green

"The wisdom of the author shines through this entire work. This book will hug on the heart as Mr. Lassiter describes raising magnificent human beings whose lives are shaped by theory, laws that they have no say so in, and the determination of their parents. This book leaves readers changed, if not socially aware as the ending surprises you with heroes that show themselves in the nick of time. This book left me cheering for society as a whole while keeping in mind the very important role I will play as myself."

-Kri' Shawn Terrell



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Deals

BY RACHEL DEAHL

■ Doubleday Gets “Older” with Maigret and Mas

In a preempt, Doubleday’s **Shelley Wanger** took North American rights to **Caroline de Maigret** and **Sophie Mas**’s *Older but Better, but Older*. The authors, who wrote the best-seller *How to Be a Parisian Wherever You Are*, were represented by agent **Susanna Lea**, who has an eponymous shingle. This book, Lea said, is “an irreverent, playful account of leaving your youth behind.” Rights had also sold, at press time, to publishers in Australia, Germany, the Netherlands, and the U.K.

■ Hajdu Goes Graphic at Columbia

David Hajdu (*Positively 4th Street*) sold his first work of graphic nonfiction to Columbia University Press. **Phillip Leventhal** at



Hajdu

Columbia took world English rights to *A Revolution in Three Acts* from **Chris Calhoun** at the Chris Calhoun Agency. Calhoun said the book is

“a historical story of three ‘wildly transgressive’ stars of the Vaudeville stage: Bert Williams, the African-American minstrel performer; Eva Tanguay, the ‘I Don’t Care’ girl; and Julian Eltinge, a female impersonator.” Cartoonist **John Carey** is handling art for the book.

■ Gallery Buys New Andrews Titles

Gallery Books’ **Jennifer Bergstrom** inked a four-book deal, with Writers House, to continue publishing



Andrews

V.C. Andrews—bylined books. Andrews (*Flowers in the Attic*) died in 1986, but her series has lived on; *Flowers in the Attic* titles have continually been released for over 30 years. **Al Zuckerman** at WH inked the world rights agree-

ment, through which **Andrew Neiderman** (*The Devil’s Advocate*) will continue to pen the Andrews-branded titles. The first book under the deal is titled *The Swan* and, per Zuckerman, “explores the story of the first Corrine, the grandmother of the mother who locks her children in an attic” in *Flowers in the Attic*. It’s planned that *The Swan* and its sequel will be two of the four titles under this deal. The publication of the original *Flowers in the Attic* will celebrate its 40th anniversary next year.

■ Morrow Re-ups Shalvis

Bestselling author **Jill Shalvis** signed a four-book deal with William Morrow and



Shalvis

its Avon imprint. The world rights agreement, brokered by Shalvis’s current editor, **May Chen**, and Writers House agent **Robin Rue**, covers three new Heartbreaker Bay contemporary romances that will be released by Avon, as well as a women’s fiction trade paperback to be published by Morrow.

■ Wallace Kennedy Hits the “Road” with Bloomsbury

Nancy Miller at Bloomsbury bought North American rights to a book by **Peggy Wallace Kennedy**, the daughter of former



Kennedy

Alabama governor and vocal Jim Crow supporter **George Wallace**. The book, titled *The Broken Road*, will offer, Bloomsbury said, “a powerful look back at [the author’s] political awakening and her life as the daughter of one of America’s most virulent segregationists.” **Wallace Kennedy**, who is writing *The Broken Road* with her husband **Mark Kennedy** (a former Alabama Supreme Court justice), is now, as Bloomsbury put it, “a noted racial reconciliation

advocate”; she was represented by **Gail Ross** at the Ross Yoon Agency, and the book is set for winter 2020.

■ Briefs

Eileen Rothschild at St. Martin’s Press took world rights to three new books in **Emily**



March

March’s bestselling Eternity Springs series. **Meg Ruley** and **Christina Hogrebe** at the Jane Rotrosen Agency represented March, who will, with the books released under the deal, be branching the series out to a new plot arc called the *McBrides of Texas*. The contemporary romances, set in a small town, will begin with *Boone* in spring 2019 and, SMP said, will be a “family-linked trilogy set within the Eternity Springs world.”

For Thomas & Mercer, **Jessica Tribble**



Lillie

bought world rights, at auction, to a currently untitled debut by **Vanessa Lillie**. The psychological suspense title was sold by **Victoria Sanders** at Victoria Sanders & Associates; she said the novel, set for 2019, follows “a new mother suffering from postpartum psychosis while reeling from the brutal murder of a close friend.”

John Scognamiglio at Kensington nabbed world rights to **James D. Ship-**



Shipman

man’s Task Force Baum in a deal brokered by **Evan Marshall** at the Evan Marshall Agency. The novel is based on the true story of the secret mission orchestrated by General Patton in March 1945 that sent a group of American soldiers into Germany. Kensington said the “unauthorized raid” saw “300 men dash 50 miles behind enemy lines to liberate a POW camp because one

Graphic Novel Publishing

Humanoids' New Graphic Imprints Add Memoir, Kids, YA

of its prisoners was [Patton's] son-in-law." Shipman's book, Kensington added, tells the story of the raid from three different points of view.

In another deal at St. Martin's Press, Peter Wolverton took world English rights to Brian C. Muraresku's *The Religion with No Name*. The book, subtitled *Rediscovering a Lost History of Psychedelics, the Secret Origins of Christianity and the Faith of the Future*, was described by SMP as "David Grann meets Dan Brown" and chronicles the author's attempts to "reveal how psychedelics hold the key to unlocking the mysteries of the cosmos and the meaning of life, and why these taboo substances are destined to save a civilization in crisis." Emma Parry at Janklow & Nesbit represented the author.

Sasquatch Books' Susan Roxborough



Hart

acquired world rights to Melissa Hart's *Better with Books: 500 Diverse Novels to Open Minds, Ignite Empathy, and Encourage Self-Acceptance in*

Teens. The nonfiction title was sold by Jennifer Unter at the Unter Agency and will, the agent said, "help young readers explore social issues affecting their lives." The book is set for April 2019.

Humanoids, a French-owned, Los Angeles-based publisher of French graphic novels, is expanding its catalogue with three new lines: a character-driven imprint focused on personal memoir called Life Drawn, which launched in April; a children's/YA line called Humanoids Kids, which launched in fall 2017; and another imprint to be announced in October at New York Comic Con. The new imprints bring variety to the Humanoids list, which is best known for epic science fiction, as the company looks to attract new readers while retaining its core audience.

Humanoids was founded in Paris in 1974 by comics artists Moebius (Jean Giraud) and Philippe Druillet and writer Jean-Pierre Dionnet. Swiss entrepreneur Fabrice Giger purchased the company in 1988, and under his stewardship, it established offices in the U.S. and Japan. The U.S. office became the company's headquarters in 2013, and it has added a production division to work on developing its properties for other media.

The publisher's core line includes multivolume sci-fi sagas such as Moebius and Alejandro Jodorowsky's *The Incal* and Jodorowsky and Juan Gimenez's *The*

Metabarons, as well as long list of popular crime, humor, and action/adventure stories. Humanoids is also known for its oversize hardcover volumes and high production values. In addition to graphic novels, Humanoids publishes the comics anthology magazine *Heavy Metal*.

The Life Drawn titles are a departure from the company's previous books. "In what we call the Humanoids core line, the characters play their roles in a larger, epic tale," Giger said. "In the Life Drawn books, the characters are the story; it's all about them."

Life Drawn launched in April with the first volume of Nicholas Wild's *Kabul*

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Knopf Lands 'Zhvigo' Book for Seven Figures

After a 14-bidder auction, Jordan Pavlin at Knopf won North American rights to Lara Prescott's *We Were Never Here*. The novel, based on the actual events surrounding the publication of Boris Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago*, sold for seven figures.

Jeff Kleinman and Jamie Chambliss from Folio Literary Management represented Prescott in the deal. Kleinman said that publishers "fell in love with the novel"; that love translated into a frenzy for the book, with editors scrambling to buy it a few hours after it began circulating.

Set during the Cold War, *We Were Never Here* explores the curious role the CIA played in trying to get *Dr. Zhivago* into the hands of more Russians after the book was banned in the Soviet Union. The CIA smuggled the novel into the country to, as Knopf explained, "orchestrate its use as a weapon of propaganda for the West."

Prescott, who recently received an MFA from the University of Texas in Austin, worked in politics before she started writing fiction.

—R.D.



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Disco, a memoir of Wild's time in Afghanistan; the second volume of the trilogy will be out in September. In May, Life Drawn will publish the first volume of Clement Baloup's *Vietnamese Memories*, a collection of first-person stories of Vietnamese immigrants living in France. Following in June will be Carole Maurel's *Luisa*, a young adult graphic novel with an LGBTQ twist about a 15-year-old girl who travels forward in time and meets her 33-year-old self. Humanoids brought in noted American writer Mariko Tamaki (*This One Summer*) to adapt *Luisa* for American readers.

The Life Drawn titles all come from another French publisher, La Boite à Bulles, with which Humanoids formed a partnership last year. Giger credits La Boite à Bulles founder Vincent Henry with building the line: "It's a type of content that was not previously covered by Humanoids—not because we didn't want to [cover it], but because it is highly complicated to build a coherent, and profitable, graphic novel catalogue in that field," Giger said. "And that is precisely what Vincent has achieved in the past 15 years."

Humanoids' juvenile line launched in August 2017 with the first volume of *Gregory and the Gargoyles* by Denis-Pierre Filippi, J. Etienne, and Silvio Camboni. The three-volume series was a top seller for Humanoids in Europe, Giger said, and he hopes to replicate its success with English-language readers. The young readers catalogue also includes *The Magical Twins*, a children's book by Jodorowsky—which, Giger points out, is a book that adult fans of Jodorowsky's work can share with their children.

Humanoids director of sales and marketing Jud Meyers said the publisher will be at the American Library Association's Annual Conference this month, as well as at the Thought Bubble

comics convention in the U.K. in September.

Meyers said the publisher will be marketing the new material to bookstores and to the comic shop market. "The bookstore market has always been our bread and butter," Meyers said. "The content we are coming out with is very much bookstore/library/school material, because it's topical—there is social/

political content, very emotional content. However, we all know the trend in the direct market has been toward graphic novels and away from periodicals. We are seeing with the orders for *Kabul Disco*, which are very healthy, that the direct market stores understand that they need to have more [graphic novels] because that's what people want."

Giger sees the new imprints as an addition that stays close to the company's roots in terms of stories and production values. "I believe that this new imprint will appeal to many of our core readers, as they will find our usual Humanoids touch: well-curated books with a strikingly original tone," he said. "But we also expect to capture a brand new readership: individuals of all ages and gender who have been moved by [graphic works of memoir and literary fiction] and consequently made a success of books such as *Persepolis*, *Blankets*, and *Maus*."

—Brigid Alverson

Call for Information

Feature: Cookbooks

Issue: Aug. 27 **Deadline:** June 29

We'd like to hear from publishers about their big forthcoming cookbooks, pub. dates September 2018–February 2019. We'd also like to hear from writers who coauthor cookbooks with chefs, and from agents and editors who match chefs with coauthors. Email pitches, comments on background, and links to artwork to features@publishers-weekly.com by June 29 and put "Call for Info: Cookbooks" in the subject line.



Announcing Nord Compo's *The Future of Publishing* Podcast Series

Publishing industry leaders, starting with John Ingram, sound off on the future of the book business in this new podcast series

Nord Compo is partnering with *Publishers Weekly* and Book Buddy Media to produce *The Future of Publishing*, a podcast series featuring interviews with leaders from across the international publishing industry. Conceived by Nord Compo's Arnaud Lecompte, director of digital and international business development, and hosted by Larry Bennett, executive director, North America, these interviews will look ahead to developments likely to shape publishing over the next three to 10 years.

"Our goal is to have a wide diversity of opinions and perspectives from industry leaders across multiple disciplines," Bennett says. "Accordingly, our initial interviewees include leaders in e-book publishing and distribution, the top distributors to mass and traditional markets, the pre-eminent digital print provider, and a leading children's book publisher. In future podcasts, we intend to include thought leaders from complementary disciplines that influence book publishing, including content creation and technology."

The Future of Publishing will explore the publishing industry broadly, extrapolating from today's trends and imagining what will be important to the book business throughout the world in the coming years. The goal of the series is to enable industry leaders to share insights, experiences, and useful information and thereby stimulate conversation among industry professionals.

Nord Compo is a leading supplier of prepress composition, digital, and editorial services for publishers. With 50 years of experience and more than 500 full-time employees, Nord Compo services many industry leaders, including Elsevier, Hachette, Ingram, Pottermore, Princeton University Press, Sourcebooks, and Springer. Seattle-based Book Buddy Media, which handles podcast production for *The Future of Publishing*, is a major supplier of high-quality audiobooks specializing in, but not limited to, the K-12 market.

"Our once-staid industry has been going through major changes since the 1950s, when a majority of trade books were sold through department stores like Macy's," Bennett says. "The pace of change seems to be accelerating in this century, with the advent of the internet, e-books, digital printing, and industry consolidation. We thought it would be interesting to get industry leaders' perspectives on where we are heading."

The debut podcast, featuring a conversation with Ingram Content Group chairman John Ingram, launches today. Visit publishersweekly.com/nordcompo.

Nord Compo's *The Future of Publishing* Podcast

The first podcast launches on June 11, with episodes to follow according to the schedule below. Here's a preview of each conversation:



June 11: John Ingram, chairman of Ingram Content Group, Ingram Digital, and Lightning Source

Ingram's position as one of the most vertically integrated players in the industry—occupying leadership roles in digital printing, distribution, and wholesaling—gives him a broad perspective on the overall industry. Ingram shares his views on the trajectory of the self-publishing phenomenon, the impact of new technology on POD, and where indie stores are headed.



July 23: Marcus Leaver, former CEO, Quarto Group

Leaver reminds us time and again of the old publishing adage "content is king." While he appreciates the technological revolution the book industry is going through, for children's books, nothing beats a good story.



September 17: Steve Potash, president and CEO, OverDrive

As the undisputed leader in supplying e-books to libraries, Potash gives his views on the changing role of public libraries in the U.S. and overseas, and on the expanding role of e-books in the K-12 market. He shares his "secrets" on how OverDrive, a 30-year-old industry leader, still feels like an exciting start-up to employees.



October 22: Dennis Abboud, president, CEO, chairman, Readerlink

Abboud brings a unique perspective as CEO of, by far, the largest supplier of books to nonbookstore booksellers. His outlook and perspective give listeners insight into the future of and potential growth in nontraditional outlets and print books, which of course dominate Readerlink's business.



November 12: Mark Coker, CEO/founder of Smashwords

Coker talks about the trajectory of indie publishing and discusses trends in the e-book market of interest to authors and publishers alike.

Visit publishersweekly.com/nordcompo or nordcompo.com/podcast to listen, or search for *The Future of Publishing* wherever you get your podcasts.

BY CAROLYN JURIS

Game of Foes

Stephen King has the #1 book in the country for the second week in a row, and the #1 book in each of BookScan's eight designated market areas. Nonfiction is slightly more of a mixed bag, with the new Dungeons & Dragons reference guide, *Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes*, at #3 in the country, topping six of eight DMAs.

Joanna Gaines's blockbuster cookbook *Magnolia Table*, #4 in the country, scooped the other two DMAs—South Atlantic and South Central, which includes Gaines's home state of Texas. It pubbed April 24 and is the second-best-selling book of the year to date.

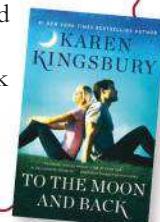
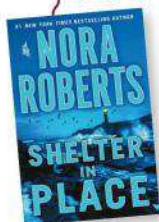


Gimme Shelter

A pair of new fiction releases offer different takes on the aftermath of violence.

Debuting at #2 in hardcover fiction and #2 overall, *Shelter in Place* by Nora Roberts follows the survivors of a mass shooting at a shopping mall who, years later, are targeted by one of the massacre's conspirators. "Roberts's characters are serviceable," our review said, "but the real draw is the story, which has some welcome red herrings and a page-turning brio that elevates it above the average thriller."

Karen Kingsbury's *To the Moon and Back* lands at #4 in hardcover fiction. This latest Baxter Family book centers on the connection between Brady, who was a child when his mother was killed in the Oklahoma City bombing, and Jenna, who lost both of her parents in the attack. "Kingsbury skillfully weaves a tale of divine love coming to those in the most need in this romantic tearjerker," our starred review said.



NEW & NOTABLE

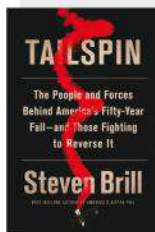


CALYPSO

David Sedaris
#3 Hardcover Nonfiction,
#6 overall

A beach read, Sedaris style: upon hitting middle age, the author bought a beach house, which he named Sea Section.

It serves as the centerpiece of 21 essays on family and aging in what our starred review called a "hilarious yet tender volume."



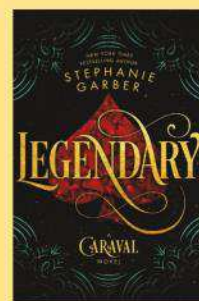
TAILSPIN

Steven Brill
#13 Hardcover Nonfiction
The journalist and Court TV founder "brings both detailed reporting and wide-ranging perspective to this insightful account of how America

reached its current state," our starred review said. "Despite his stinging indictment of lawyers, money men, and politicians, Brill still finds worthwhile possibilities everywhere, from innovative job training programs to campaign finance crusades."

The Legend Continues

The #5 book in children's frontlist fiction is *Legendary* by Stephanie Garber. It follows her 2017 debut, the fantasy *Caraval*, which our starred review called "magnificent." The sequel's release gave a nice boost to the trade paper edition of the first book, which sold twice as many copies as it had the week before the week the sequel pubbed.



TOP 10 OVERALL

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	UNITS
1	<i>The Outsider</i>	Stephen King	Scribner	51,747
2	<i>Shelter in Place</i>	Nora Roberts	St. Martin's	41,144
3	<i>Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes</i>	-	Wizards of the Coast	35,534
4	<i>Magnolia Table</i>	Joanna Gaines	Morrow	32,357
5	<i>Oh, the Places You'll Go!</i>	Dr. Seuss	Random House	31,715
6	<i>Calypso</i>	David Sedaris	Little, Brown	21,110
7	<i>Shadow Keeper</i>	Christine Feehan	Berkley	20,711
8	<i>The Gray Ghost</i>	Cussler/Burcell	Putnam	17,495
9	<i>Fairytale</i>	Danielle Steel	Dell	16,649
10	<i>The Restless Wave</i>	McCain/Salter	Simon & Schuster	15,458

ALL UNIT SALES PER NPD BOOKSCAN EXCEPT WHERE NOTED



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Hardcover Frontlist Fiction

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	1	The Outsider	Stephen King	Scribner	9781501180989	51,747
2	–	Shelter in Place	Nora Roberts	St. Martin's	9781250161598	41,144
3	–	The Gray Ghost	Cussler/Burcell	Putnam	9780735218734	17,495
4	–	To the Moon and Back	Karen Kingsbury	Howard	9781451687651	13,019
5	–	The Death of Mrs. Westaway	Ruth Ware	Scout	9781501156212	10,546
6	2	The Cast	Danielle Steel	Delacorte	9781101884034	10,382
7	3	The Fallen	David Baldacci	Grand Central	9781538761397	10,363
8	4	The 17th Suspect	Patterson/Paetro	Little, Brown	9780316274043	8,634
9	7	Before We Were Yours	Lisa Wingate	Ballantine	9780425284681	6,685
10	9	Little Fires Everywhere	Celeste Ng	Penguin Press	9780735224292	6,186
11	8	The High Tide Club	Mary Kay Andrews	St. Martin's	9781250126061	6,073
12	13	The Woman in the Window	A.J. Finn	Morrow	9780062678416	5,460
13	11	The Great Alone	Kristin Hannah	St. Martin's	9780312577230	5,281
14	6	Warlight	Michael Ondaatje	Knopf	9780525521198	4,920
15	10	By Invitation Only	Dorothea Benton Frank	Morrow	9780062390820	4,747
16	12	Twisted Prey	John Sandford	Putnam	9780735217355	4,225
17	15	The Crooked Staircase	Dean Koontz	Bantam	9780525483427	3,441
18	17	Circe	Madeline Miller	Little, Brown	9780316556347	3,355
19	14	The Favorite Sister	Jessica Knoll	Simon & Schuster	9781501153198	3,249
20	5	Beach House Reunion	Mary Alice Monroe	Gallery	9781501193293	3,171

Hardcover Frontlist Nonfiction

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	–	Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes	–	Wizards of the Coast	9780786966240	35,534
2	1	Magnolia Table	Joanna Gaines	Morrow	9780062820150	32,357
3	–	Calypso	David Sedaris	Little, Brown	9780316392389	21,110
4	2	The Restless Wave	McCain/Salter	Simon & Schuster	9781501178009	15,458
5	3	The Soul of America	Jon Meacham	Random House	9780399589812	15,078
6	8	A Higher Loyalty	James Comey	Flatiron	9781250192455	13,646
7	4	How to Change Your Mind	Michael Pollan	Penguin Press	9781594204227	12,207
8	7	12 Rules for Life	Jordan B. Peterson	Random House Canada	9780345816023	11,941
9	5	Barracoon	Zora Neale Hurston	Amistad	9780062748201	8,668
10	10	Girl, Wash Your Face	Rachel Hollis	Nelson	9781400201655	8,600
11	6	Facts and Fears	James R. Clapper	Viking	9780525558644	7,253
12	9	Three Days in Moscow	Bret Baier	Morrow	9780062748362	7,225
13	–	Tailspin	Steven Brill	Knopf	9781524731632	6,031
14	12	Educated	Tara Westover	Random House	9780399590504	5,811
15	11	I'll Be Gone in the Dark	Michelle McNamara	Harper	9780062319784	5,577
16	13	Bad Blood	John Carreyrou	Knopf	9781524731656	5,214
17	23	100 Days to Brave	Annie F. Downs	Zondervan	9780310089629	4,440
18	43	The Clean 20	Ian K. Smith	St. Martin's	9781250182074	4,379
19	14	Factfulness	Hans Rosling	Flatiron	9781250107817	3,896
20	–	Living with the Monks	Jesse Itzler	Center Street	9781478993421	3,721

LW: rank last week



Mass Market Frontlist

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	–	Shadow Keeper	Christine Feehan	Berkley	9780451490124	20,711
2	–	Fairytale	Danielle Steel	Dell	9781101884089	16,649
3	–	The Black Book	Patterson/Ellis	Grand Central	9781538729083	14,008
4	1	The Midnight Line	Lee Child	Dell	9780399593505	11,398
5	2	Don't Let Go	Harlan Coben	Dutton	9781101984277	9,481
6	–	Beyond Control	Kat Martin	Zebra	9781420143195	9,217
7	–	Two by Two	Nicholas Sparks	Vision	9781455520671	9,188
8	–	Evil Never Sleeps	William W. Johnstone	Pinnacle	9780786042159	8,763
9	–	Use of Force	Brad Thor	Pocket	9781476789392	8,342
10	–	The Devil to Pay	William W. Johnstone	Pinnacle	9780786040483	8,250
11	4	Camino Island	John Grisham	Dell	9781524797157	7,478
12	–	Navy Grooms	Debbie Macomber	Mira	9780778331230	7,353
13	–	The Summer That Made Us	Robyn Carr	Mira	9780778369165	7,241
14	–	Undaunted	Diana Palmer	HQN	9781335629395	6,956
15	–	Cowboy Ever After	Miller/Yates	HQN	9781335523822	6,434
16	–	Too Wilde to Wed	Eloisa James	Avon	9780062692467	6,378
17	–	Fade to Black	Heather Graham	Mira	9780778310747	6,349
18	5	The Couple Next Door	Shari Lapena	Penguin Books	9780525505310	6,291
19	3	Herons Landing	Joann Ross	HQN	9781335949356	5,996
20	7	One Last Breath	Lisa Jackson	Zebra	9781420136135	5,692

Trade Paperback Frontlist

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	1	Into the Water	Paula Hawkins	Riverhead	9780735211223	13,040
2	2	Princess	Patterson/Jones	Grand Central	9781538714430	10,499
3	4	Sapiens	Yuval Noah Harari	Harper Perennial	9780062316110	9,331
4	5	Killers of the Flower Moon	David Grann	Vintage	9780307742483	9,117
5	3	Less	Andrew Sean Greer	Back Bay	9780316316132	9,002
6	6	Hillbilly Elegy	J.D. Vance	Harper	9780062300553	8,709
7	7	Everybody, Always	Bob Goff	Nelson	9780718078133	8,491
8	8	The Sun and Her Flowers	Rupi Kaur	Andrews McMeel	9781449486792	7,855
9	–	A Stranger in the House	Shari Lapena	Penguin Books	9780735221130	7,032
10	9	Two Kinds of Truth	Michael Connelly	Grand Central	9781455524174	6,917
11	10	Come Sundown	Nora Roberts	Griffin	9781250123084	6,171
12	11	A Dog's Way Home	W. Bruce Cameron	Forge	9780765374660	5,783
13	15	The Lying Game	Ruth Ware	Scout	9781501156205	5,730
14	12	Pachinko	Min Jin Lee	Grand Central	9781455563920	5,629
15	13	Small Great Things	Jodi Picoult	Ballantine	9780345544971	4,915
16	22	Behind Closed Doors	B.A. Paris	Griffin	9781250132369	4,719
17	17	Same Beach, Next Year	Dorothea Benton Frank	Morrow	9780062390790	4,568
18	28	The Alice Network	Kate Quinn	Morrow	9780062654199	4,490
19	18	The Midnight Line	Lee Child	Bantam	9780525482895	4,485
20	20	We Were the Lucky Ones	Georgia Hunter	Penguin Books	9780399563096	4,476

LW: rank last week

Children's Frontlist Fiction

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	The Burning Maze (The Trials of Apollo #3)	Rick Riordan	Disney-Hyperion	9781484746431	11,925
2	Dog Man and Cat Kid (Dog Man #4)	Dav Pilkey	Graphix	9780545935180	11,377
3	War Storm	Victoria Aveyard	HarperTeen	9780062422996	6,936
4	The Getaway (Diary of a Wimpy Kid #12)	Jeff Kinney	Amulet	9781419725456	6,767
5	Legendary	Stephanie Garber	Flatiron	9781250095312	6,733
6	A Tale of Two Kitties (Dog Man #3)	Dav Pilkey	Graphix	9780545935210	5,543
7	Children of Blood and Bone	Tomi Adeyemi	Holt	9781250170972	4,091
8	Positively Izzy	Terri Libenson	HC/Balzer + Bray	9780062484963	4,032
9	Talons of Power (Wings of Fire #9)	Tui Sutherland	Scholastic	9780545685436	3,664
10	Ghost	Jason Reynolds	Atheneum	9781481450164	3,590
11	A Court of Frost and Starlight	Sarah J. Maas	Bloomsbury	9781681196312	3,328
12	Tales from a Not-So-Secret Crush... (Dork Diaries #12)	Rachel Renée Russell	Aladdin	9781534405608	3,230
13	Big Nate: Silent but Deadly	Lincoln Peirce	Andrews McMeel	9781449489915	2,919
14	Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda (movie tie-in)	Becky Albertalli	HC/Balzer + Bray	9780062792167	2,798
15	Endling: The Last	Katherine Applegate	HarperCollins	9780062335524	2,712
16	Restart	Gordon Korman	Scholastic Press	9781338053807	2,698
17	The Hidden Oracle (The Trials of Apollo #1)	Rick Riordan	Disney-Hyperion	9781484746417	2,624
18	Refugee	Alan Gratz	Scholastic Press	9780545880831	2,612
19	We Were Liars	E. Lockhart	Ember	9780385741279	2,528
20	Turtles All the Way Down	John Green	Dutton	9780525555360	2,503
21	Alien vs Bad Guys (The Bad Guys #6)	Aaron Blabey	Scholastic	9781338189599	2,436
22	The Nerdiest, Wimpiest, Dorkiest I Funny Ever	Patterson/Grabenstein	LB/Patterson	9780316349611	2,419
23	A Wrinkle in Time (movie tie-in)	Madeleine L'Engle	FSG	9781250153272	2,391
24	Scythe	Neal Shusterman	Simon & Schuster	9781442472433	2,366
25	The Darkest Minds	Alexandra Bracken	Disney-Hyperion	9781368022453	2,366

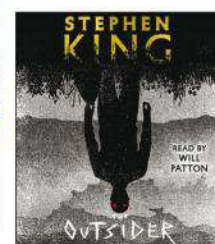
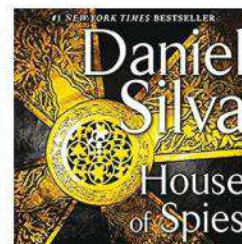
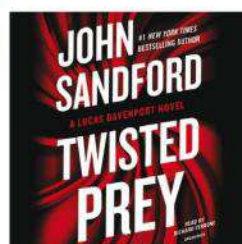
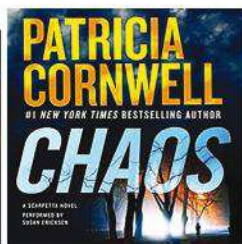
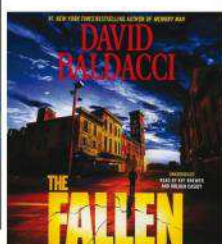
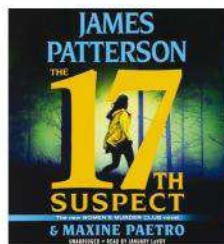
Children's Picture Books

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	Oh, the Places You'll Go!	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780679805274	31,715
2	An Elephant & Piggie Biggie!	Mo Willems	Disney-Hyperion	9781484799673	11,502
3	Seuss-isms!	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780553508413	8,249
4	The Very Hungry Caterpillar	Eric Carle	Philomel	9780399226908	7,580
5	First 100 Words	Roger Priddy	Priddy	9780312510787	6,670
6	Goodnight Moon	Brown/Hurd	HarperFestival	9780694003617	6,526
7	Love You Forever	Robert Munsch	Firefly	9780920668375	5,549
8	Giraffes Can't Dance	Andreae/Parker-Rees	Cartwheel	9780545392556	5,204
9	The Wonderful Things You Will Be	Emily Winfield Martin	Random House	9780385376716	4,611
10	Solo: A Star Wars Story: The Official Guide	Pablo Hidalgo	DK	9781465466907	4,558
11	Little Blue Truck	Schertle/McElmurry	HMH	9780544568037	4,541
12	A Day in the Life of Marlon Bundo	Twiss/Keller	Chronicle	9781452173801	4,534
13	I Wish You More	Rosenthal/Lichtenheld	Chronicle	9781452126999	4,382
14	Dr. Seuss's ABC	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780679882817	4,229
15	On the Night You Were Born	Nancy Tillman	Feiwel and Friends	9780312601553	4,040
16	Just Me and My Dad	Mercer Mayer	Random House	9780307118394	4,011
17	Your Baby's First Word Will Be Dada	Fallon/Ordóñez	Feiwel and Friends	9781250071811	3,975
18	Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?	Martin/Carle	Holt	9780805047905	3,969
19	Guess How Much I Love You	McBratney/Jeram	Candlewick	9780763642648	3,864
20	Dear Zoo	Rod Campbell	Little Simon	9781416947370	3,855
21	The Pout-Pout Fish	Diesen/Hanna	FSG	9780374360979	3,813
22	Welcome Little One	Sandra Magsamen	Sourcebooks	9781492632641	3,748
23	The Giving Tree	Shel Silverstein	HarperCollins	9780060256654	3,732
24	Chicka Chicka Boom Boom	Martin/Archambault	Little Simon	9781442450707	3,679
25	I Love Dad with the Very Hungry Caterpillar	Eric Carle	Grosset & Dunlap	9781524785895	3,570


Physical Audio Bestsellers | APR. 30–JUNE 3, 2018

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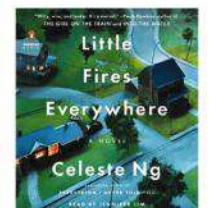
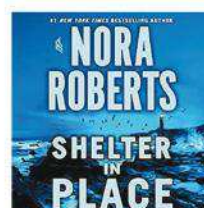
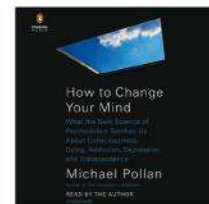
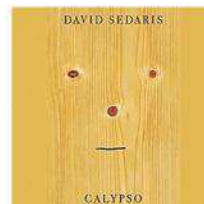
RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	PUB DATE	UNITS
1	The 17th Suspect	Patterson/Paetro	Little, Brown	Apr 2018	2,823
2	The Fallen	David Baldacci	Grand Central	Apr 2018	2,000
3	Chaos	Patricia Cornwell	Harper Audio	Nov 2017	1,772
4	The Fallen (abridged)	David Baldacci	Grand Central	Apr 2018	1,728
5	Twisted Prey	John Sandford	Penguin Audio	Apr 2018	1,271
6	House of Spies	Daniel Silva	Harper Audio	Feb 2018	1,255
7	The Outsider	Stephen King	Simon & Schuster Audio	May 2018	1,245
8	The Men Who United the States	Simon Winchester	Harper Audio	Sep 2014	1,236
8	I've Got My Eyes on You	Mary Higgins Clark	Simon & Schuster Audio	Apr 2018	1,214
10	A Higher Loyalty	James Comey	Macmillan Audio	Apr 2018	1,170
11	Dragon Teeth	Michael Crichton	Harper Audio	Apr 2018	1,150
12	The Women in the Castle	Jessica Shattuck	Harper Audio	Jan 2018	1,130
13	Come Sundown	Nora Roberts	Brilliance Audio	Apr 2018	1,112
14	A Mother's Love	Nora Roberts	Brilliance Audio	Mar 2018	1,105
15	The Seventh Plague	James Rollins	Harper Audio	Aug 2017	1,103
16	Norse Mythology	Neil Gaiman	Harper Audio	Mar 2018	1,030
17	The Restless Wave	McCain/Salter	Simon & Schuster Audio	May 2018	965
18	Woman of God	Patterson/Paetro	Little, Brown	Apr 2018	965
19	All by Myself, Alone	Mary Higgins Clark	Simon & Schuster Audio	Mar 2018	939
20	Red Alert	Patterson/Karp	Little, Brown	Mar 2018	801



iBooks Audio Bestsellers | MAY 28–JUNE 3, 2018

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RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	PUBLISHER
1	The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck	Mark Manson	HarperAudio
2	The Outsider	Stephen King	Simon & Schuster Audio
3	Calypso	David Sedaris	Hachette Audio
4	12 Rules for Life	Jordan B. Peterson	Random House Canada
5	Girl, Wash Your Face	Rachel Hollis	Nelson
6	The Fallen	David Baldacci	Hachette Audio
7	Mindfulness	Dharma Hazari	Dharma Hazari
8	How to Change Your Mind	Michael Pollan	Penguin Audio
9	Shelter in Place	Nora Roberts	Brilliance Audio
10	Little Fires Everywhere	Celeste Ng	Penguin Audio





Mystery

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	FORMAT
1	Twisted Prey	John Sandford	Putnam	9780735217355	Hardcover
2	All by Myself, Alone	Mary Higgins Clark	Pocket	9781501131127	Mass Market
3	The Good Daughter	Karin Slaughter	Morrow	9780062430250	Mass Market
4	16th Seduction	Patterson/Paetro	Vision	9781538744413	Mass Market
5	A Legacy of Spies	John le Carré	Penguin Books	9780735225138	Trade Paperback
6	The Black Book	Patterson/Ellis	Grand Central	9781538729083	Mass Market
7	Shattered	Allison Brennan	St. Martin's	9781250146441	Mass Market
8	Robert B. Parker's Old Black Magic	Ace Atkins	Putnam	9780399177019	Hardcover
9	Glass Houses	Louise Penny	Minotaur	9781250066299	Trade Paperback
10	The Disappeared	C.J. Box	Putnam	9780399176623	Hardcover

Romance

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	FORMAT
1	Come Sundown	Nora Roberts	Griffin	9781250123084	Trade Paperback
2	Navy Brides	Debbie Macomber	Mira	9780778331216	Mass Market
3	Flamingo Diner	Sherryl Woods	Mira	9780778369752	Mass Market
4	Woman of God	Patterson/Paetro	Vision	9781455569335	Mass Market
5	Someone to Care	Mary Balogh	Berkley	9780399586088	Mass Market
6	Shadow Keeper	Christine Feehan	Berkley	9780451490124	Mass Market
7	Fine Things	Danielle Steel	Dell	9780440200567	Mass Market
8	White Lace and Promises	Debbie Macomber	Harlequin	9781335145116	Mass Market
9	State Secrets	Linda Lael Miller	Harlequin	9781335941244	Mass Market
10	Welcome to Moonlight Harbor	Sheila Roberts	Mira	9780778368052	Mass Market

Science Fiction

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	FORMAT
1	Ready Player One	Ernest Cline	Broadway	9780307887443	Trade Paperback
2	The Power	Naomi Alderman	Little, Brown	9780316547611	Hardcover
3	Ready Player One (movie tie-in)	Ernest Cline	Broadway	9780804190138	Trade Paperback
4	Ready Player One	Ernest Cline	Broadway	9781524763282	Mass Market
5	Dune	Frank Herbert	Ace	9780441172719	Mass Market
6	Star Wars: Last Shot	Daniel José Older	Del Rey	9780525622130	Hardcover
7	Ready Player One (movie tie-in)	Ernest Cline	Broadway	9780804190145	Mass Market
8	Ender's Game	Orson Scott Card	Tor	9780812550702	Mass Market
9	The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy	Douglas Adams	Del Rey	9780345391803	Mass Market
10	Writers of the Future, Vol. 34	–	Galaxy	9781619865754	Trade Paperback

Fantasy

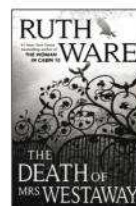
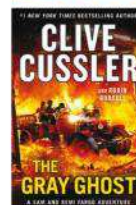
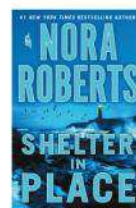
RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	FORMAT
1	Norse Mythology	Neil Gaiman	Norton	9780393356182	Trade Paperback
2	Death Doesn't Bargain	Sherrilyn Kenyon	Tor	9780765385710	Hardcover
3	Annihilation	Jeff VanderMeer	FSG	9780374104092	Trade Paperback
4	The Name of the Wind	Patrick Rothfuss	DAW	9780756404741	Mass Market
5	The Fifth Season	N.K. Jemisin	Orbit	9780316229296	Trade Paperback
6	Season of Storms	Andrzej Sapkowski	Orbit	9780316441636	Hardcover
7	Dark Queen	Faith Hunter	Ace	9781101991428	Mass Market
8	The Wise Man's Fear	Patrick Rothfuss	DAW	9780756407919	Trade Paperback
9	A Game of Thrones	George R.R. Martin	Bantam	9780553573404	Mass Market
10	A Darker Shade of Magic	V.E. Schwab	Tor	9780765376466	Trade Paperback



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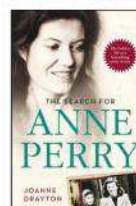
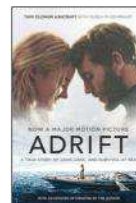
Fiction & Literature

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN
1	Shelter in Place	Nora Roberts	St. Martin's	9781250161611
2	By Invitation Only	Dorothea Benton Frank	Morrow	9780062390837
3	The Gray Ghost	Cussler/Burcell	Putnam	9780735218741
4	Little Fires Everywhere	Celeste Ng	Penguin Press	9780735224308
5	The High Tide Club	Mary Kay Andrews	St. Martin's	9781250126092
6	The Death of Mrs. Westaway	Ruth Ware	Scout	9781501156229
7	The Cast	Danielle Steel	Delacorte	9781101884041
8	The Great Alone	Kristin Hannah	St. Martin's	9781250165619
9	Before We Were Yours	Lisa Wingate	Ballantine	9780425284698
10	Paris for One and Other Stories	Jojo Moyes	Penguin Books	9780735221192
11	Crazy Rich Asians	Kevin Kwan	Anchor	9780385536981
12	Caravans	James A. Michener	Dial	9780812986334
13	The Handmaid's Tale	Margaret Atwood	HMH	9780547345666
14	Then She Was Gone	Lisa Jewell	Atria	9781501154669
15	The High Season	Judy Blundell	Random House	9780525508724
16	Sacred Stone	Cussler/Dirgo	Putnam	9781101204856
17	Dietland	Sarai Walker	Mariner	9780544373440
18	Less	Andrew Sean Greer	LB/Boudreaux	9780316316149
19	The Swans of Fifth Avenue	Melanie Benjamin	Delacorte	9780345539755
20	The Templar's Revenge	J. Robert Kennedy	J. Robert Kennedy	—



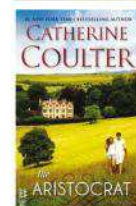
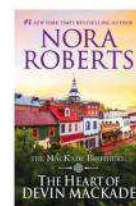
Biography & Autobiography

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN
1	Educated	Tara Westover	Random House	9780399590511
2	Robin	Dave Itzkoff	Holt	9781627794251
3	A Higher Loyalty	James Comey	Flatiron	9781250192462
4	Adrift (movie tie-in)	Tami Oldham Ashcraft	Dey Street	9780062868190
5	The Search for Anne Perry	Joanne Drayton	Arcade	9781628723984
6	The Restless Wave	McCain/Salter	Simon & Schuster	9781501178016
7	Facts and Fears	James R. Clapper	Viking	9780525558651
8	Leonardo da Vinci	Walter Isaacson	Simon & Schuster	9781501139178
9	Reading with Patrick	Michelle Kuo	Random House	9780812997323
10	Marcel's Letters	Carolyn Porter	Skyhorse	9781510719347

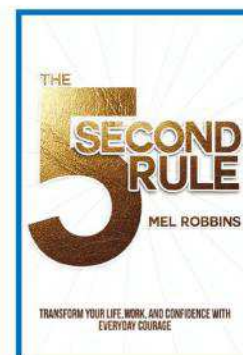
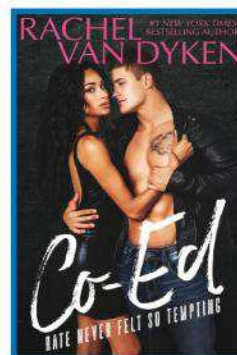
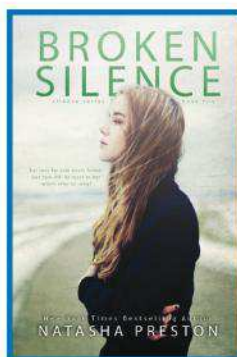
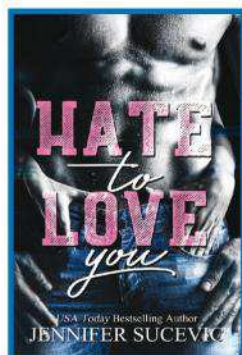
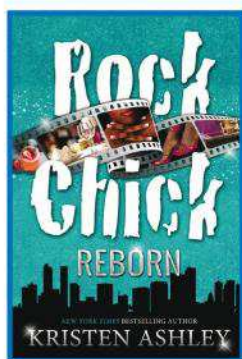


Romance

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN
1	The Heart of Devin MacKade	Nora Roberts	Silhouette	9781488098529
2	The Aristocrat	Catherine Coulter	InterMix	9781101622520
3	Mogul	Katy Evans	KT	9780997263695
4	A Mistake, a Prince and a Pregnancy	Maisey Yates	Harlequin	9781488098154
5	Part-Time Lover	Lauren Blakely	Lauren Blakely	—
6	Outlander	Diana Gabaldon	Dell	9780440335160
7	Mine After Dark	Marie Force	HTJB	9781946136527
8	Shadow Keeper	Christine Feehan	Berkley	9780451490131
9	Reasonable Doubt	Whitney G.	WGW	9780990317074
10	Too Wilde to Wed	Eloisa James	Avon	9780062692405



RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	CATEGORY	ISBN	PRICE
1	Rock Chick Reborn	Kristen Ashley	Romance	9781370499182	\$2.99
2	Hate to Love You	Jennifer Sucevic	Romance	9781370621712	\$2.99
3	Broken Silence	Natasha Preston	Romance	9781301920686	\$2.99
4	Co-ed	Rachel Van Dyken	Romance	9781942246886	\$3.99
5	The 5 Second Rule	Mel Robbins	Self-Help	9781682612392	\$9.99
6	The Biker's Baby	Sam Crescent	Romance	9781773396323	\$4.99
7	Brothers South of the Mason Dixon	Abbi Glines	Romance	9780988301382	\$3.99
8	Oaths	Lindsay Buroker	Fantasy	9781370393756	\$4.99
9	The Legend of Nimway Hall	Linda Needham	Romance	9781940904030	\$3.99
10	Wild Addiction	Emma Hart	Romance	9781310247651	\$4.99
11	The Proposal	Katie Ashley	Romance	9781301578511	\$2.99
12	Players, Bumps and Cocktail Sausages	Natasha Preston	Romance	9781311298089	\$2.99
13	Lie to Me	Natasha Preston	Romance	9781370073771	\$2.99
14	Hunted	Evangeline Anderson	Romance	9781452425603	\$3.99
15	Sought	Evangeline Anderson	Romance	9781452436296	\$3.99
16	Sleeping with Monsters	Amelia Hutchins	Romance	9780997005585	\$4.99
17	The Birthday List	Devney Perry	Romance	9780998358352	\$3.99
18	Models	Mark Manson	Family & Relationships	9781476065809	\$12.95
19	Rock Chick	Kristen Ashley	Romance	9781458112873	\$3.99
20	If You Were Mine	Jennifer Sucevic	Romance	9781370681112	\$2.99
21	Chocolate Hearts and Murder	Patti Larsen	Mystery & Detective	9781988700083	\$3.99
22	Taunting Destiny	Amelia Hutchins	Fantasy	9781301211227	\$4.99
23	Foreign Relations	Rebecca Forster	Mystery & Detective	9781370142811	\$3.99
24	The Hookup	Kristen Ashley	Romance	9781370740475	\$3.99
25	Jilly's Wyked Fate	R.E. Butler	Romance	9781370943012	\$3.99



A Trove of Collectible Toy Tie-Ins

Publishers translate the surprise and delight of toy collecting to the world of children's books

By Karen Raugust

Since 2014, collectible toy brands—including MGA Entertainment's L.O.L. Surprise, Moose Toys' Shopkins, Spin Master's Hatchimals, and WowWee's Fingerlings—have dominated the best-seller lists in that industry. Not surprisingly, they have also spilled over into the world of publishing.

The very strong sales levels have caught publishers' eyes. "Collectible toys are a really tricky area to publish into, I think," says Simon Beecroft, DK's publishing director of licensing, which, along with its sister imprint Penguin Young Readers, announced the acquisition of the Fingerlings license on May 15. "But these toys are really fun, and they're everywhere. You couldn't get hold of these Fingerlings at the holiday. They were going in and selling through immediately, and no one could track them down."

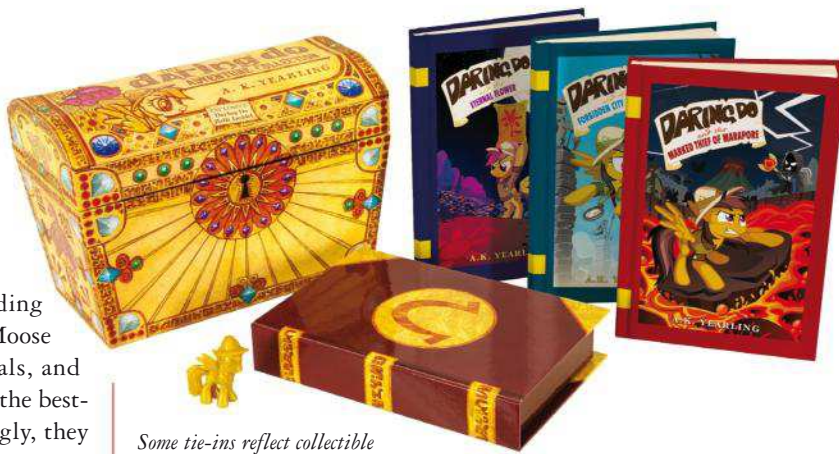
The brands' origin as consumer products, as opposed to media properties, is also attractive. "They're already at retail, and there's an expectation from the buyers that there will be publishing," says Debra Dorfman, v-p and publisher, global licensing, media, and brands at Scholastic, which signed on as the primary publisher of Shopkins titles in 2014 and now has five million Shopkins books in print. "Rather than asking the licensor, 'Are you doing consumer products?' we're asking, 'Who are you selling in to?' That's different from working with a broadcaster or studio." This year, Scholastic is adding to its collectible toy roster with Ty's Beanie Boos and Moose's Pikmi Pops.

Challenges of Timing and Longevity

"A lot of these brands are in and out, aren't they?" Beecroft asks. "You have to be prepared to do something fast and move on."

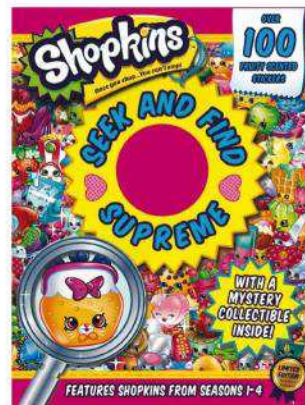
"It's always a risk," agrees Sonali Fry, publisher of Bonnier's BuzzPop imprint, which has been releasing Shopkins titles since 2015, with 2.5 million books in print to date. "When you figure out your publishing plan at the beginning, you know by year two or three you might have to reevaluate and pare down, depending on what is happening with the brand."

"We're looking for partners that really have a clear long-term vision for their brands," says Daniel Moreton, associate publisher at Penguin Workshop. Penguin Young Readers holds the licenses for Hatchimals, as well as Fingerlings.



Some tie-ins reflect collectible toys' play pattern by incorporating exclusive or surprise figures.

For the most part, the lifespan of a publishing tie-in program mirrors the trajectory of the toys. As soon as toy sales slow, retailers give less shelf space to the toys and the accompanying books. Still, core formats can live on. Dorfman reports that Scholastic recently renewed its Shopkins license, focusing mainly on backlist with occasional frontlist titles added.



"Our books tend to have legs past the hype," says Jenny Hastings, general manager and executive v-p at Bendon. She notes that Bendon's Shopkins titles, published since 2015, remain strong, especially in mass retailers' planograms. The company is adding Hatchimals to its assortment this year and just acquired the license for L.O.L. Surprise, formerly held by Parragon, along with additional proprietary formats.

Another timing issue relates to the fact that collectibles are released in seasons, with a half-dozen or so new characters introduced for a limited time and then replaced. While this strategy enhances collectability, it can be a headache for publishers.

"It's tricky," Moreton says, noting that guides can go out of date quickly. "With new titles, we try to tie in to what's on-shelf and even give a sneak peek at what's ahead, if the licensor allows it."

"Publishing is slow, with the production, printing, and shipping times," Beecroft says. "The toys constantly refresh, and the main thing is the newness all the time. The challenge is keeping up. You also have to provide a lot of vibrancy and make the books as interactive and as fun as they can be."

Samantha Schutz, publishing director, licensed and media tie-ins for Little, Brown, notes that even less up-to-date books can help feed kids' enjoyment of the brand. "We're in the busi-

ness of kids' obsessions," she says. "Kids want to be experts. They want to know what figures they're missing and which are rare, so the older handbooks are still useful."

Schutz points out that many toy lines, even without roots in collectibles, integrate some form of collectability as part of the play pattern these days—especially blind bags or boxes containing a surprise collectible figure. "We're not publishing against a Shopkins, but many of our brands have a collectible element," she says, citing Marvel, My Little Pony, and *Teen Titans Go!* as examples. "Even *Spirit* has a line of blind boxes now." (*Spirit Riding Free* is a Netflix TV series about horses.)

To mirror the toys' allure, some publishers offer exclusive figures or other collectible elements such as trading cards with their tie-ins. DK has published Lego guides with an exclusive mini-figure mounted on the front, for example.

Meanwhile, the act of opening a package and discovering what is inside, as captured in popular YouTube unboxing videos, is another key component of toy collecting today. "Unboxing is becoming the big trend," Beecroft explains. "The YouTube trend has expanded back to the toys." As a result, toys are often designed for several levels of discovery, from the outer package, to other packages or layers inside, to a final step, such as removing a clay shell or dunking a figure in water to reveal what it is.

The challenge is how to translate this element of surprise to a book format, whether through an interactive feature, such as a scratch-off or acetate decoder, or within the story line. Bendon created a \$1.89 play pack format that includes stickers and a play figure. "It's our spin on the blind bags," Hastings says.

BuzzPop's *Shopkins Seek-and-Find Supreme* has an opaque blister pack affixed to the cover, with one of four figures from the new season contained within each. "We tried to replicate the toy play pattern," Fry says. "You don't know what character you have until you open it." She notes, however, that the expense can be prohibitive, especially for books that are sold through mass channels. "The collectible blister pack has been very popular, but the unit cost is much higher than that of other books."

Telling a Story

Collectible toys naturally lend themselves to character handbooks, activity books, and novelty formats. But publishers also are looking for opportunities to create fiction.

"We're not just looking for cuddly characters," Moreton says. "We want a backstory. We want to be able to extend the narrative." Penguin's Fingerlings books will launch with a Mad Libs Jr. title in August, followed this fall by a 10" × 10" paper-over-board picture book. The latter is based on a story originating on WowWee's Fingerlings YouTube channel, which debuted on May 11.

In some cases, publishers collaborate with property owners to develop stories. "We always ask if there is a backstory, but as long as they're open to us developing story lines together, we're fine," Dorfman says.

"Toy companies create great toys, and they can show up at our door with a great collectible product, but without a lot of story

behind it," Schutz says. "Some are grateful to have help to create the story."

Of course, a lack of story is not a problem for formats such as coloring and activity. "We focus on the top brands in popularity," says Ben Ferguson, Bendon's president and CEO. "As long as the wave is up, we're interested."

All-Ages Appeal

Many of the top collectible brands are focused on kids (often girls) ages seven to 10, with the sweet spot for books a bit younger. But collectibles often interest adults as well. Little, Brown's *My Little Pony Daring Do Adventure Collection*, which comes with an exclusive golden collectible figure, is a case in point. "It attracted not just kids, but Bronies and other adult fans," says Sandra Cohen, director of licensing and brand management. (Bronies are adult males who are My Little Pony fans.)

This all-ages appeal can help sell properties internally and to retailers as well. "When we gave out Pikmi Pops at a sales conference, everything stopped," Dorfman says. "We had a room full of adults opening the packages and asking each other which one they got and what their scent was."

IDW has capitalized on the broad popularity of collectibles



Tie-ins such as IDW's Funko Universe collection appeal to all ages.

by partnering with Funko's Pop! Vinyl brand, producing a number of variant covers as well as limited-edition original comics under the Funko Comic Book Universe umbrella. The one-shots—tied to *Ghostbusters*, *Judge Dredd*, *Strawberry Shortcake*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, and *The X-Files*—were also collected into a trade edition.

"We have all these licensed properties that we manage, and when we go into bookstores and comic shops we see the Funko Pop! Vinyls," says managing editor David Hedgecock.

"We noticed that we have a lot of the same brands, and eventually we just put two and two together and approached them. We wanted to do something with a fun mix of disparate properties for a wide range of fans, using the style of Funko storytelling and marrying that to what the brand demands are."

IDW is looking at working with other collectible brands. "I like to say we're the publisher of fandom, and the Pop! Vinyl pieces are right there in the zeitgeist," Hedgecock says. "We're taking long, hard looks at all of the collectible toy brands."

Though most publishers of licensed tie-ins report they are keeping an eye out for the next big thing in collectibles, the market is increasingly formidable. "There are so many similar and copycat brands out there," Fry says. "The market is getting saturated with them, so if we take one on, it has to be the right one." ■

Party Like It's... BookExpo 2018!

Open Book turns one at a medley of BookExpo fetes celebrating the people of publishing

By Louisa Ermelino

BookExpo 2017 was the launch of my Open Book column, and to mark the one-year anniversary, I thought I would spare the text and spoil the reader by attending as many BookExpo 2018 parties as I could get to. With me was an intrepid and good-natured colleague, news reporter John Maher (who didn't even flinch when, after a vodka or two, I started calling him Jimmy Olsen), taking photos. It's been a good year, and, with any luck, it will keep getting better. ■



Me and John Maher



*PW staffers
Mark Rotella (l.),
Claire Kirch, and
Jonathan Segura*



*Marlon Ja
and Tomi*



*Bill Thomas (l.),
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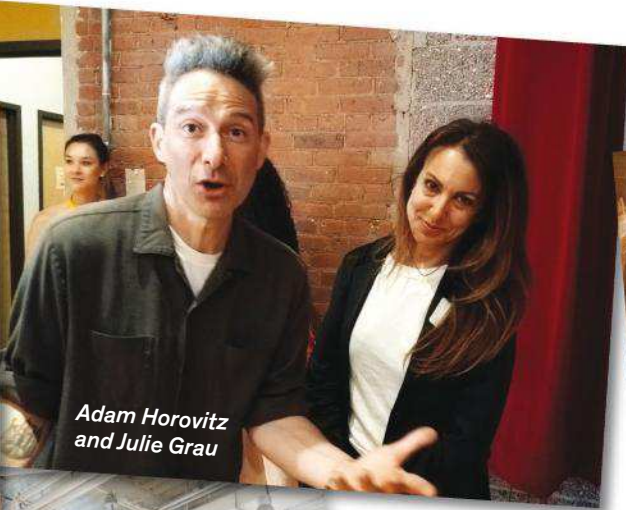
Gina Centrello and me



Susan Kamil, Mitchell Kaplan, and Gary Shteyngart (r.)



Me and Markus Dohle



Adam Horovitz and Julie Grau



Marion Garner (l.), Robin Desser, and Kristin Cochrane (r.)



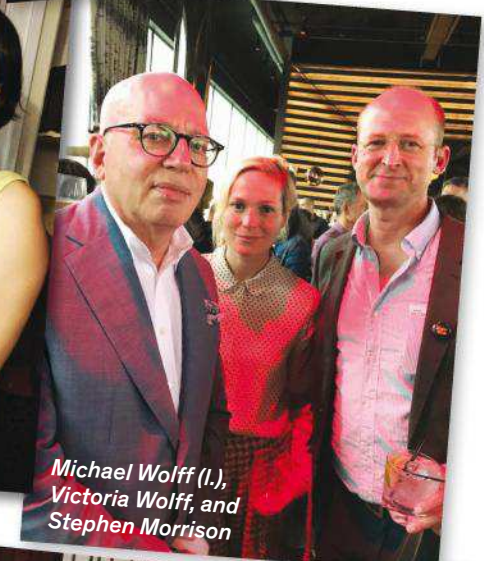
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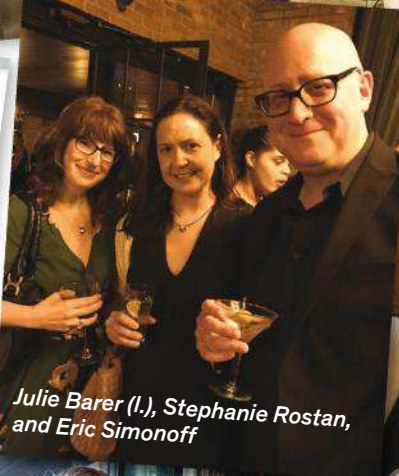
Boris Kachka and Mieke Chew



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Kate Greathead (l.) and Marysue Rucci



Julie Barer (l.), Stephanie Rostan, and Eric Simonoff



Me and Miwa Messer

Jodi Picoult



L. to r.: Rumaan Alam, Jennifer Barth, Michael Taeckens, and Sara Nelson

Rallying Cry

In an industry grappling with issues of diversity, romance authors of color are banding together and speaking out

By ERIN AILWORTH

When Romance Writers of America announced its 2018 finalists for the Rita Awards on March 21, author Piper Huguley's frustration mounted. Unable to stay silent about African-American authors yet again being left absent from the list for the romance genre's most prestigious award, she tweeted: "If a Black person ever won a Rita it would be national news."

Conversations about the romance publishing industry's lack of diversity have bubbled up repeatedly over the years. But this time they hit a boiling point, helped in large part by Huguley and by Courtney Milan, a 2017 Rita award winner for the self-published novella *Her Every Wish*.

In a series of tweets to her more than 25,000 followers several days later, Milan laid bare the mistreatment and discrimination often endured by writers of color within RWA and the broader romance world. She alleged, for instance, that Harlequin snubbed author Phyllis Bourne by not inviting her to a publisher signing, as is customary, after her book *Heated Moments* was named a 2016 Rita finalist.

"I do not see how we can move forward as an organization if the white women who make up the bulk of the membership remain unaware of just how badly WOC are being hurt," Milan wrote in one post.

Tweets and blog posts from other authors of color quickly followed—many of them testimonials, but also calls for action and promises of continued pressure to ensure change. Enough, they say, is enough.

Harlequin declined to be interviewed for this story, but Loriana Sacilotto, executive v-p, global publishing and strategy, said in a statement, "In the past we have had authors with books in May, June, and July at the RWA signing because we have inventory of their books. Going forward we will include our Rita-nominated authors at the RWA signing."

Milan and Bourne also declined to be interviewed, but *PW* spoke with many authors, editors, publishers, agents, and



“WHITE ROMANCELANDIA NEEDS TO COME TO GRIPS WITH SOME VERY UNCOMFORTABLE TRUTHS ABOUT THEMSELVES. —LaQuette, author

others about romance publishing's lack of diversity, how to address the resulting discrimination faced by writers of color, and the short shrift often given to books whose main characters are not white.

Dee Davis, president of RWA's board, says the idea that anyone has ever felt unwelcome within RWA's ranks "makes me sick to my stomach," but she acknowledges that authors of color have experienced mistreatment. "Members can tell stories of what other members did that would have you in tears. We certainly have a problem and we need to figure out what to do."

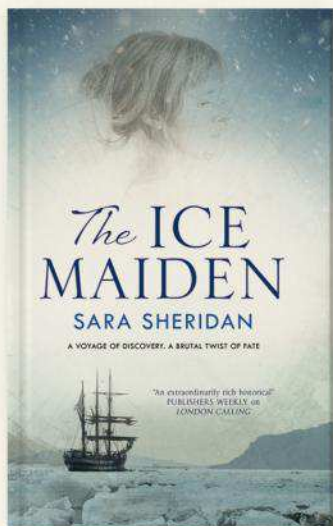
Most remedies, Davis says, aren't going to solve the problem instantly. "Nothing is going to get fixed overnight," she says. "We're potentially going to screw it up, and then we're going to go back and try to fix it again."

Social Media Muscle

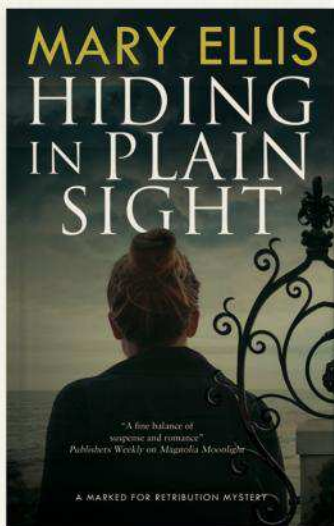
Efforts are already underway at RWA. As it did for the first time in 2017, the organization will hold a diversity summit for pub-

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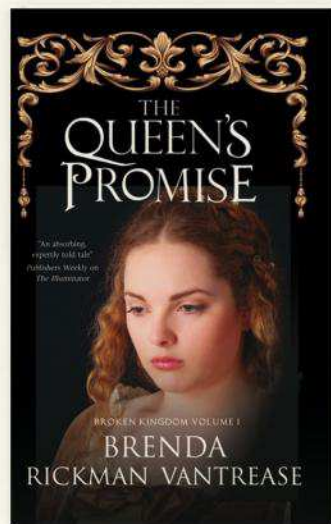
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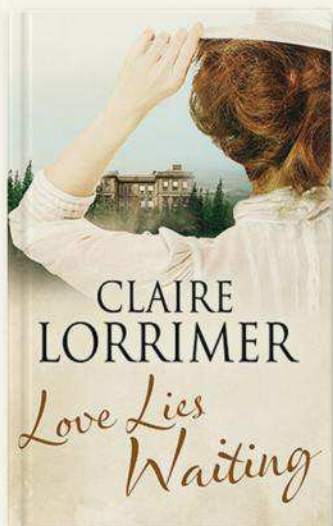
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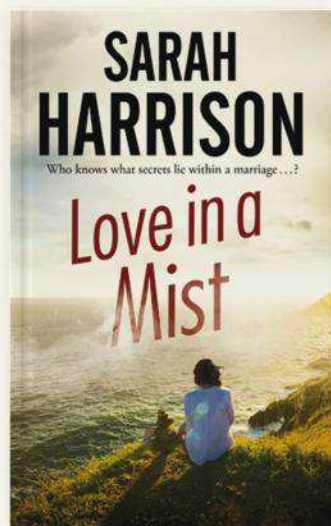
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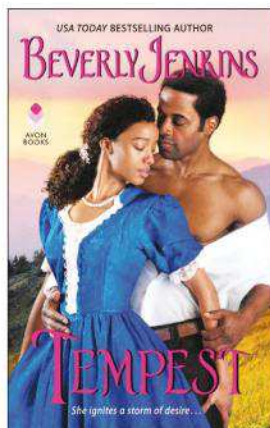


lishing executives and representatives from key retailers at its upcoming national conference in July, and will discuss the findings of an RWA-commissioned NPD BookScan survey of romance readers across ethnicity, age, and sexual orientation. RWA, Davis says, has begun looking at how best to study the demographics of its membership. Regarding the Rita contest and its judging, she also promises that, starting in July, “there will be some new rules in place.”

Some writers expressed optimism, saying RWA’s leadership and a few industry movers seem ready to effect change. “I give the board credit for taking this on,” says veteran author Beverly Jenkins. “This is not an easy subject to deal with.” Still, frustration, among Jenkins and others, remains prevalent.

LaQuette, an African-American author of erotic, multicultural romances who is under contract with Dreamspinner Press, puts it bluntly: “White Romancelandia needs to come to grips with some very uncomfortable truths about themselves.” She and other writers of color are helping rip off the blinders.

For instance, when one author suggested creating a “diversity romance” Rita category for works by authors of color, LaQuette quickly flagged the idea as segregationist. “What we need is true and genuine inclusion,” she says. As she wrote in a series of tweets, “Black is not a separate category [because] black people are people and therefore experience the same issues in love, relationships, and romance that white people do.”



“IF I HAD LIMITED MY READING BY RACE, I WOULD NOT BE HERE.”

—Beverly Jenkins, author

Social media has been a megaphone amplifying the voices of authors of color and highlighting the breadth of the problem in a way that is proving hard for RWA, publishing houses, and others in the industry to ignore.

A day after LaQuette, who won RWA–NYC’s 2016 Golden Apple Award for author of the year, raised the alarm about the “diversity romance” suggestion, RWA made clear it was not considering such categories. “That would defeat RWA’s goal of inclusiveness for all members,” the organization said via Twitter.

That’s perhaps the biggest difference between the industry

Love Connections

Harper Miller, whose most recent book is the self-published *Complexity* (2016), and Adriana Herrera, who is considering offers for what will be her debut novel, *American Dreamer*, cocreated the PoC Queer Romance Authors Community Page, an online collective for authors of color writing queer romances, and a resource guide for readers and publishers, editors, and agents.

What motivated you to start your website?

A.H.: The reason we started this collective is so that the stories that we’re writing have a podium. I like the idea of a space where being the author of color is the norm. There’s enough of us—our presence or inclusion in all spaces should be the norm.

How is your network helping to raise the profiles of authors of color?

H.M.: If you truly want to seek out the work of a queer romance author of color you have a place to go. Now there’s no excuse because you have this centralized location.

A.H.: We’re hoping that people are looking at this list and they’re saying, “Wow, there are some really good stories happening here,

things I haven’t read before. I want to see more of this.” And hopefully the right people start to take notice and say, “Maybe we should get on this, maybe we should start to look at these authors and try to acquire them.”

How have your efforts been received by other authors? What about publishers?

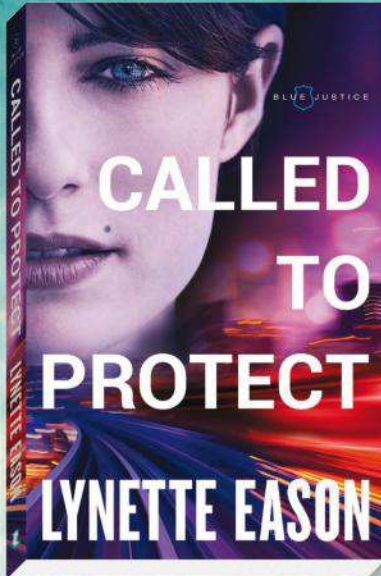
H.M.: When Adriana and I were talking about this, just having a conversation about the collective, we said, “Let’s send it out on Twitter.” [We got] so many retweets—I think we’re talking about 300. You know, people thanking us. We really didn’t expect the outpouring of support. [We wanted] to make sure that lots of people get eyes on their work, and social media has helped remarkably in that regard.

A.H.: Social media is like that piece of consciousness-raising—getting those ideas and those faces and those names out there.

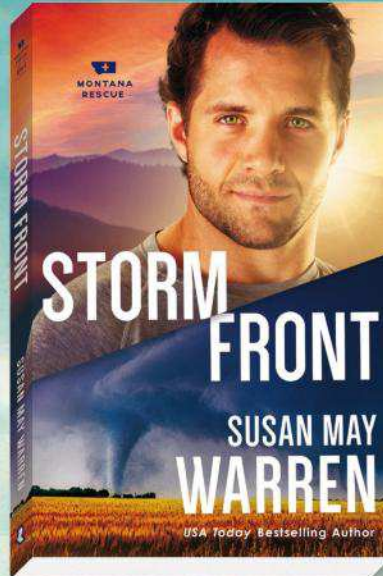
H.M.: From the retweets, I’ve had a couple of likes and re-shares from editors and editorial assistants, so it’s being discussed in publishing houses. We’ve done the grunt work for you. It’s up to you now to do the rest; pick up the baton and run with it.

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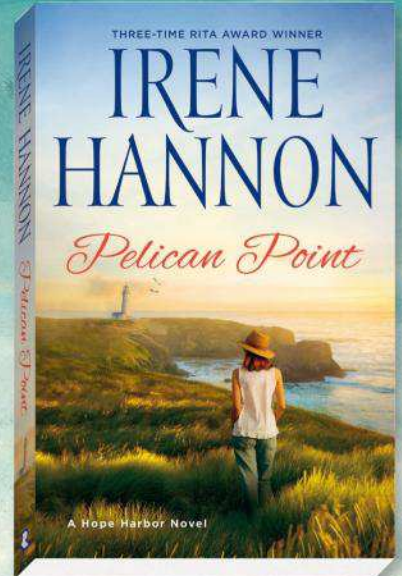
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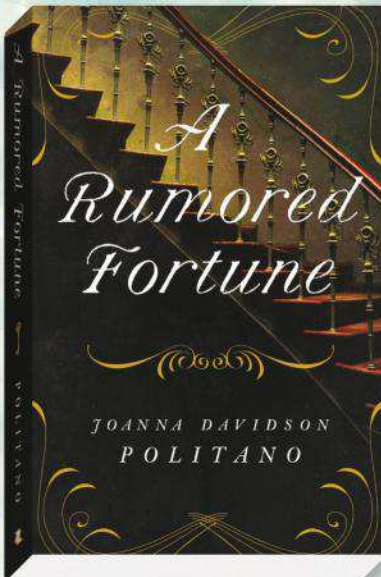
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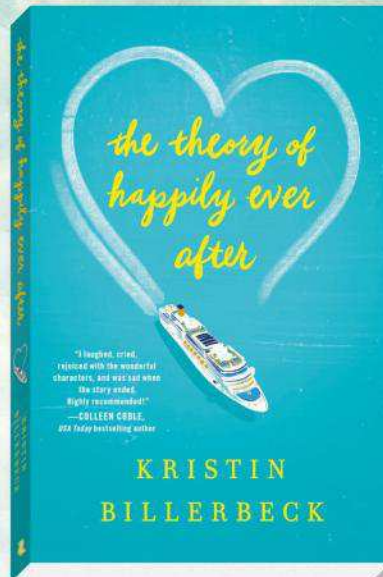
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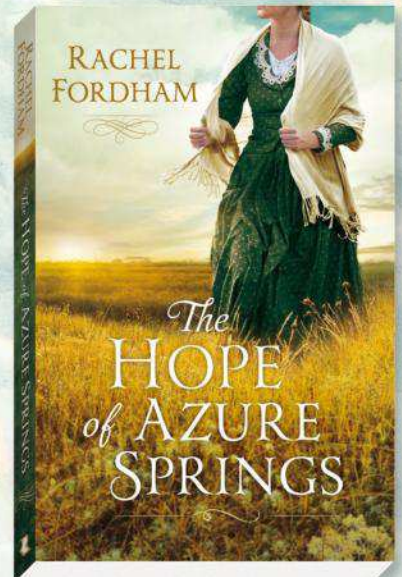
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landscape now and 20 years ago, when Brenda Jackson—the first African-American author to publish under Harlequin’s Silhouette Desire line—was still making her name and fighting discrimination to win book deals. She recalls having a publisher tell her it would buy her book if she made her characters white; Jackson refused. In another instance, an editor commented to Jackson and others at an RWA workshop that she felt works by black authors were inferior to those by white authors.

Social media, Jackson notes, gives authors today a very public way to fight back. “You will get called out,” she says. “These young people, they will galvanize on social media, they will put your picture out there.”

Political Context

Though authors of color have long talked about the need for diversity at all levels in the romance world, the efforts to bring that discussion into the mainstream have gained urgency amid the current social and political climate. “Anyone who doesn’t think things have changed—that race relations haven’t changed—under Trump, they’ve got their head in the sand,” Jackson says. “Racism, whether they want to acknowledge it or not, is being emboldened by the present administration.”

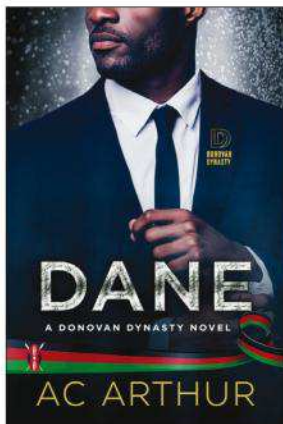
But many in the romance world say they also feel energized. The Black Lives Matter and #MeToo movements, as well as the #NeverAgain gun control movement, are inspirations, they say, to speak out about the injustices authors of color face.

That includes being ignored at book signings and conferences, where authors of color say many attendees avoid eye contact or visiting their tables. Author L. Penelope says she once sat down at an event only to have the rest of the women at the table leave their seats. She decided to talk about it, she says, because she saw another author’s account of the same thing happening to them.

“There’s been a lot of bitterness from black authors,” says Penelope, whose debut novel, *Song of Blood & Stone*, won the 2016 self-publishing e-book award from the Black Caucus of the American Library Association and was then picked up by

“YOU NEED TO
SHOW US THAT
YOU ARE REALLY
COMMITTED.”

—author A.C. Arthur,
speaking to publishers



Lifting a Weight

In February 2015, in celebration of Black History Month, author Rebekah Weatherspoon highlighted the work of black women who write romance novels with the hashtag #BlackWomenInRomance. That mission evolved into WOC in Romance, a website promoting works by women of color. Weatherspoon’s most recent self-published erotic romance novel, *Sanctuary*, pubbed at the end of August.

What motivated you to start your website?

I was hearing, “Oh, there’s not a lot of romance written by black people,” and I thought that was kind of weird. I am a black person who writes romance, and I know plenty of black people who write romance.

How is your site helping to raise the profiles of authors of color?

What [Women of Color in Romance] is doing differently, maybe, than some other sites is the volume of books we’re sharing every week. Most people share between five and 10, but I try to keep it between 15 and 20 every week.

It’s a concrete place for you to look. If people are saying, “I’m looking for a secret baby book,” or, “I’m looking for a marriage of convenience book,” the books are organized by trope, so you can see what’s been uploaded most recently or just browse all the books. It’s helped get a lot of books out there and into readers’ hands.

How have your efforts been received by other authors?

Lately, we’ve been getting way more [submissions]. We have a lot of books in the queue right now. For some authors that’s a small weight off their shoulders. Any author feels better knowing they can get their books featured somewhere for free.

St. Martin’s Press. “The Trump era has put a lot of pressure on our hearts and souls. The environment has come to a point where it was just waiting to explode.”

A.C. Arthur, an African-American author whose next book is the self-published *Dane* (July), recently posted a slew of tweets recounting her experiences, including the “snubs and comments” she says she has learned to expect whenever she is the only black author at a book signing with dozens of other romance writers. “I thought about not saying anything,” says Arthur, who has won multiple awards at Romance Slam Jam, an annual conference that recognizes authors who write multicultural characters. She worried how her speaking out might affect the books she is currently submitting to publishers. “But I just

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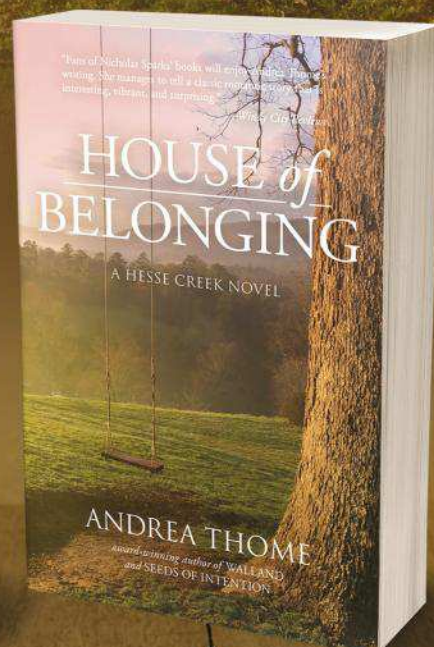
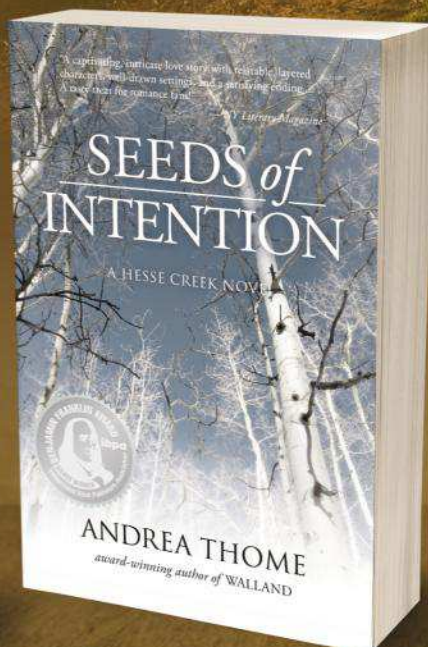
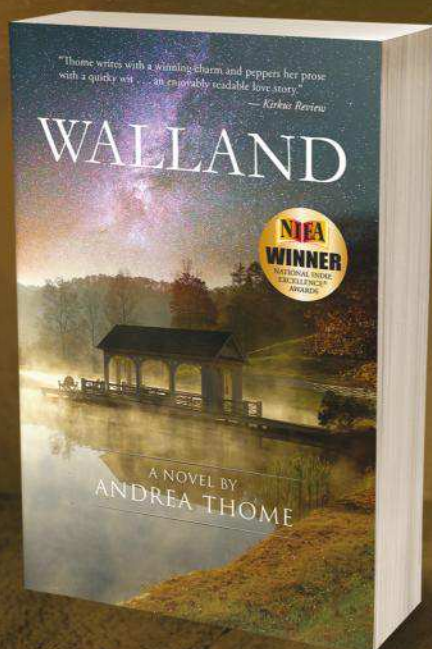
— **Foreword Review**

“Fans of Nicholas Sparks’ books will enjoy Andrea Thome’s writing. She manages to tell a classic romantic story that is interesting, vibrant, and surprising.”

— **Windy City Reviews**

This is one series that you are definitely going to want to own the physical copies of, because the covers are absolutely stunning.”

— **Kristen Kranz, Hypable**



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kept thinking, what happens if I don't?"

This attitude toward writers of color extends to their characters, several authors say, because, like Jackson, they've been asked or advised to change their character's race to white to make them more "relatable." When Alana Albertson was writing *Invaluable*, the second book in her self-published Trident Code series, she says that author friends and a prospective cover artist suggested it would be easier if she made her lead character, a professional football player turned Navy SEAL, white.

"I was thinking, 'Should I do it? Should I just go through and rewrite this character as a white guy?'" Albertson says. She couldn't. The book, which had a black man on the cover, didn't sell well. (See "Mirrors and Windows," p. 33.)

Naima Simone—whose next book, *WAGS #3*, is due from Entangled Publishing in July—had a similar experience with poor sales of a book whose cover featured a black man, and finds the relatable argument abhorrent and "ridiculous." "You can relate to billionaires, rock stars, hockey players, werewolves, shifters, but you can't relate to a black person?" she asks. "All that says to me is you don't want to."

Jenkins, the 2017 recipient of RWA's Nora Roberts Lifetime Achievement Award, explains why she has no patience for this line of thinking: "Don't come to me with that bullshit about you can't relate. When I was growing up, there were very few black authors. If I had limited my reading by race, I would not be here."

Many, including Huguley, whose *A Virtuous Ruby* (Samhain, 2015) received the Romance Slam Jam's 2016 Emma Award for best book cover, lay much of the blame on publishers. "They are rigid to the notion of what it takes to diversify," she says. "That is, bringing more authors of color—let me just say it, more black authors—across the board from Harlequin on down."

Call to Action

Harlequin—perhaps the publisher most often called out by authors—and others have vowed that they are committed to diversity, but authors of color say they want action, not words. "There are so many publishers giving us statements," says Arthur, who notes she's more optimistic than doubtful that change will come. "You just need to do it, you need to show us that you are really committed."

Harlequin announced in 2017 that Kimani Romance, which features authors of color and multicultural story lines, was among five lines that it planned to shutter, and many Kimani authors say they were cut loose rather than moved to other imprints. Arthur is one of them; her 20th Kimani title, *One Perfect Moment*, is set to publish in August, before the line closes in December. "It would have been nice if we'd been offered an invitation to speak to the other lines," she says, but instead, she adds, "I'm going over to their submittal portal just like any new author would do, and they rejected me."

In a statement to *PW*, Sacilotto at Harlequin responded, "All the Kimani authors have been invited to submit to Harlequin

Romance Publishing

lines, and, as current Harlequin authors, they will be given priority review when they do submit.”

Amid the continuing issues, some authors say they feel at least a little hope. RWA’s leadership, they say, is engaging in the conversation and has pledged to seek change.

“I’m counting on them to make this happen,” says Robin Covington, a Native American author. “I believe that they want this conversation to continue and things to come out of it.”

More broadly, authors say they’ve seen encouraging signs via social media, where people are asking about and sharing recommendations for works by authors of color.

“We’re going to get this fixed, because there are too many women who want to get this fixed,” Jenkins says. “I’m encouraged by the women on Twitter who are asking, ‘Who are the women of color I should read?’ I’m encouraged by the people who are going to Rebekah Weatherspoon’s site, *Women of Color in Romance*.” (See “Lifting a Weight,” p. 28.)

Industry Effort

Monique Patterson, editorial director at St. Martin’s Paperbacks and executive editor at St. Martin’s Press, has some thoughts about how her segment of the romance world can do more to support diversity. “It’s not just about realizing, ‘Oh, we don’t have X amount of authors of color, let’s go out and [sign] a bunch of them,’” she says. “You have to look at the whole organization and how you’re thinking and operating. On a much more simple level, we as editors—honestly, we just need to start reading and then acquiring more widely.”


Liz Pelletier, cofounder and publisher at Entangled, says she has been trying to make improvements since the *Ripped Bodice*, the only all-romance bookstore in the U.S., published its first diversity report in 2017. The study found that Entangled ranked fourth among romance publishers in terms of number of books by authors of color, behind Kensington, Forever and Forever Yours, and Crimson Romance, which Simon & Schuster has since shuttered.

Pelletier says she contacted all the agents Entangled has worked with, asking them to submit works with diverse characters and by diverse authors. She received one submission in response, and several notes saying diverse authors were in demand and their books already in negotiations. Another email encouraged her to reach out to Kimani authors; she has already contacted several.


“If Kimani authors are looking for a home, I’d love to talk to them,” Pelletier says, adding that she’ll be looking for more authors when she attends June’s Romance Slam Jam.

Deb Werksman, editorial director at Sourcebooks Casablanca, is doing the same. The publisher, which showed an improved ranking in *Ripped Bodice*’s second diversity report, released in March, reached out to the Cultural, Interracial, Multicultural Special Interest Chapter of RWA—and later all other RWA chapters—about meeting with own-voices authors to take pitches one-on-one at the recent RT Booklovers Convention, as well as

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A GAME OF CAT AND MOUSE
BETWEEN
A GIRL
with Nothing to Lose
AND
A BOY
Who Has it All

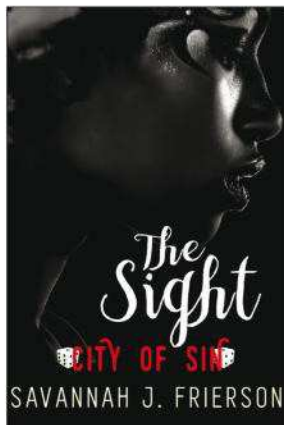


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HEAP OF PEOPLE WITH
A WHOLE HEAP OF
MONEY WHO ARE
WILLING TO SPEND IT.

—Savannah J. Frierson, author



choose how you're going to approach it. That's not something that changes overnight."

Embracing Self-Publishing

Though authors of color applaud such steps and hope for lasting change, many remain wary of traditional publishing after years of being disenfranchised or relegated to designated "diversity" imprints. Those lines may have once served to create a place for works by authors of color, but today, many say, they unnecessarily segregate those books from mainstream romance.

The rise of self-publishing, meanwhile, has given authors of color other options. "I don't have to wait for some publisher," says Covington, who publishes series books with Entangled and also self-publishes. Her novella *One Little Kiss* was nominated for a Rita in 2016. "If I get five rejections, I just say, 'Okay, I'm going to self-publish it and then let the readers decide.'"

Savannah J. Frierson has self-published most of the dozen-plus books she's written, including her most recent romance, 2017's *The Sight: City of Sin*. She calls the move to self-publishing a "necessary disruption" that should serve as a wake-up call to traditional publishers. "We are trying to tell you guys there's a whole heap of people with a whole heap of money who are willing to spend it," Frierson, who is black, says. "There is nothing this audience doesn't want to read, especially if it's featuring them getting a happy ending, being loved, and loving people."

Piper Huguley expects indie authors to keep gaining ground, and says she isn't optimistic about the future of traditional publishing unless it learns to treat authors of color and their books the same as everyone else. "I think it's extremely fortunate that there is self-publishing so that voices like mine can get out there in some way," she says. "But frankly, the industry is ignoring us at its own peril."

at RWA's annual national conference in July.

Werksman said the meetings Sourcebooks Casablanca had at the RT convention resulted in one proposal that's headed for acquisition, with more

expected soon. "There's an urgency here," she says, "and we feel that new things need to be done."

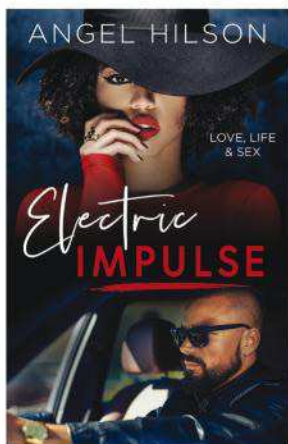
At Kensington, executive editor Selena James says, "submissions pretty much come to us by reputation, because we've been doing this for a very long time." James's responsibilities include the Dafina imprint, which publishes works by and about African-Americans and launched in 2000. The latest industry-wide discussion about diversity, she says, "doesn't change our conversation, because we're already in the game." She adds, "It's what I do every day, so it's hard for me to see it as a challenge."

Still, James says, Kensington recognizes that authors of color face challenges in getting their work into readers' hands, and that they are pushing the industry for more support. "We know our authors are having those conversations online that have to do with the discoverability of their books, and finding and maintaining a readership. That's the business of books. Discoverability is the hardest thing for any area of publishing, no matter what genre."

James says she thinks Kensington is on the right track but adds that there's room for improvement across the industry, as authors have been pointing out. "It's tough, but it's a good conversation," she says. "Not every publisher can publish every book, so you have to

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DIVERSITY IN ROMANCE
An American Love Story

Mirrors and Windows

How does a romance novel featuring characters of color put its best face forward?

As the romance world grapples with its need to be more diverse—and to reflect that diversity in its offerings—book covers are on the front lines of the battle. And several authors' experiences suggest that some readers may be more reluctant to pick up romances whose jackets feature characters of color.

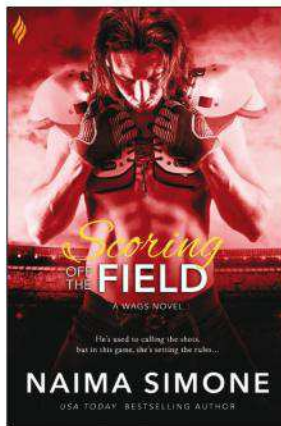
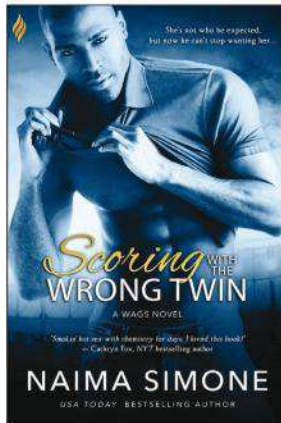
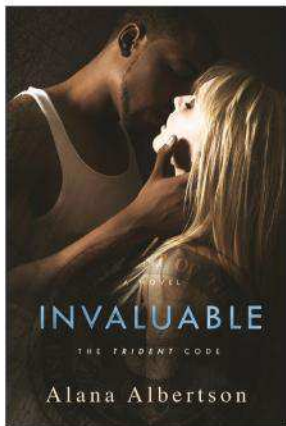
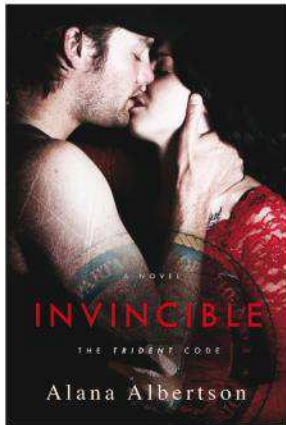
Take the first two covers in Alana Albertson's self-published romance series the Trident Code. Both show a long-haired beauty, her head tilted to receive a kiss from the handsome, muscular man cradling her jaw.

Steamy, right? Albertson thought so. But sales figures revealed something troubling to her.

The first book, *Invincible* (2014), featuring a white man on the cover, made \$9,500 in its first year, Albertson said. The second, *Invaluable* (2017), earned just \$1,375 in its first year despite being similarly rated in reviews. Although it's not uncommon for series to see a drop in sales from the first title to the second, the difference, Albertson says, is that *Invaluable's* cover depicted a black man—and readers weren't buying.

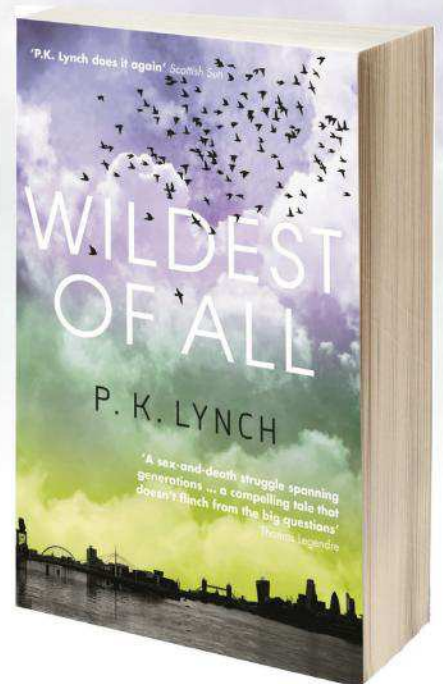
"It's absolutely heartbreaking," says Albertson, a biracial Mexican-American who writes characters of many ethnicities in her books. "It just tanked."

A similar experience for Naima Simone had her publisher, Entangled Publishing, questioning what it could have done better to promote Simone's *Scoring with the Wrong Twin* (WAGS #1, 2018), a book featuring a black hero, which sold fewer copies in its first two months than the second book in



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the series, *Scoring Off the Field*, sold in its first two weeks. The latter cover featured a white hero.

“Is it my fault? Am I not finding the readers for this book?” asks Liz Pelletier, Entangled’s cofounder and publisher. It brought home the fact that she and the Entangled staff need to do more to reach new readers.

Love Is Love

Latoya C. Smith, an agent with the L. Perkins Agency who was named 2017’s agent of the year by RWA–NYC, says publishers need to treat romances with multicultural characters and authors as they would any other book in the genre.

“Let’s say it’s a contemporary romance; you would promote that the same way that you would promote any other contemporary romance,” says Smith, whose clients include LaQuette, an author of erotic, multicultural romances. “Treat the covers the same way, treat the marketing the same way.”

Authors and editors say they’ve seen more readers picking up books whose covers feature multicultural characters, written by authors of color, in the young adult genre—and they think the same can happen in romance if publishers do more to seek out such titles. It’s important, they say, that the models used on the covers of those books accurately represent the ethnicity of the main characters.

“When readers walk into a bookstore, they [should] have a variety of choices, so that they’re seeing covers featuring happy, gorgeous couples of color in love,” says Tara Gelsomino, former executive editor at Crimson Romance, which Simon & Schuster closed in March. She launched One Track Literary Agency in April and says she’s seeking own voices stories. “Change has to start somewhere, and if we’re considered the gatekeepers, we have to open the gate wider.”

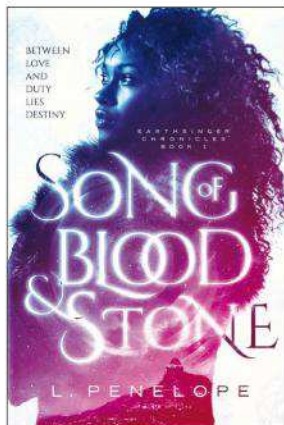
Leslye Penelope, who writes under the name L. Penelope, says that for her self-published debut novel, *Song of Blood & Stone*, having a black woman on the cover was a must, and ultimately “very powerful.” “I thought about younger Leslye walking through the bookstore craving covers that looked like her,” she says. “It was important to have that cover.”

For LaQuette, a good cover is “artful, sexy, and still tasteful,” and above all doesn’t fetishize the characters depicted.

Shannon Criss, senior acquisitions editor at EverAfter Romance, says that in an ideal world, an appealing, professionally done cover should catch any romance reader’s eye, regardless of the skin color of the character or couple portrayed. “We all judge books by covers,” she says. “But [it should not be] because they have an African-American person on the cover.”

Cameras Ready

The major hurdle, authors and editors say, is finding professionally shot, appropriate photos featuring models of color.



Albertson recalls searching the internet for interracial stock photos once and being horrified at the search results, which included offensive depictions of men of color in chains.

Most recently, Albertson says, she’s struggled to find a Mexican-American model to portray a Mexican-American character named Joaquín on the cover of an upcoming book. “I’m this close to hitting the local bars near the Marine Corps base and walking up to some men: ‘Hey, want to be on the cover of my book?’” she says.

Jenn LeBlanc, a Los Angeles photographer, often does custom work for authors and has made a concerted effort to build a stock photo portfolio

with images representing a number of multicultural groups, including the LGBTQ and disabled communities, and a variety of romantic combinations. To make headway on that goal, she’s putting together a big shoot this summer.

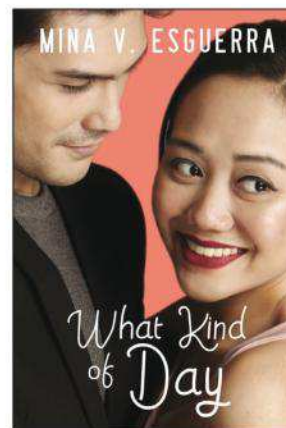
“We’re going to go through and make this big matrix of people—a big checkerboard—and see how many we can mix and match,” LeBlanc says. “We can shoot straight, we can shoot queer, we can shoot everything.”

Mina V. Esguerra, whose next self-published romance is *What Kind of Day* (June), spearheaded a similar effort within her writing community in the Philippines to crowdfund a photo shoot featuring Filipino models. The group, known as #RomanceClass, began after Esguerra hosted a free workshop in 2013 to encourage Filipino romance readers to start writing and publishing their own stories. Their books, which are available via Amazon and other online retailers, are written in English and mainly feature Filipino characters. Before the photo shoot, however, many of the titles’ covers had to be digitally illustrated because stock photography featuring Filipinos was rare.

“When the covers featuring the models started coming out and getting published, there was excitement—real excitement—to finally see Filipino faces on the cover,” Esguerra says.

The main thing to keep in mind when designing covers, Esguerra and other authors of color say, is that representation matters. “We should see ourselves [on covers],” she says. “And we should also see someone that we like.”

For more on romance cover design, see “Cover Bias,” p. 68. ■



Erin Ailworth is a biracial Mexican-American journalist in Houston and a former v-p of print for the National Association of Hispanic Journalists.



Kensington Embraces Innovation in Partnership with **Marie Force**

Force has sold millions of books through traditional and indie channels; with Kensington on board, she'll grow her audience further with new print formats, beloved ongoing series, and a foray into a new romance genre

Marie Force knows her way around a seaside romance. She is the author of 70 contemporary romance novels across multiple series, including the Gansett Island books and the Fatal series. Her Gilded series, which marks her first foray into historical romance, debuts with *Duchess by Deception*, to be published by Kensington in 2019.

When it comes to reaching readers, Force's approach has been a hybrid one—her Gansett Island books (she just published the 19th in the series), along with the Butler, Vermont, series; the Treading Water series; and the Quantum series, are self-published. "I'm fortunate to be rather prolific," Force says, "and I love the flexibility of the hybrid model that allows me to tend to five series at the same time."

Her new partnership with Kensington has enabled her to reintroduce the Gansett Island series (previously available only as e-books) in mass-market paperback editions. "One thing I've seen over my 10 years as a published author," Force says, "is there isn't a huge crossover between e-book readers and paperback readers, so it's a great opportunity to put this series in front of a whole new audience."

The Gansett Island series is close to Force's heart. The books are set on a fictionalized remote island based on the real-life Block Island, R.I., a place that Force knows quite well, as it's where she spends a part of each summer. "There's something so compelling about the isolation of island life that adds to the atmo-

sphere of the series," Force says, "and the McCarthy family and their friends continue to interest and amuse me—and my readers." Those readers are rabid fans. They've bought more than seven million copies of her books worldwide.

Force's transition from contemporary to historical romance may seem like quite a sea change, but it's been a long time

going to begin writing the second in the series later this summer, "but," she says, "I won't have eight years to write this one!"

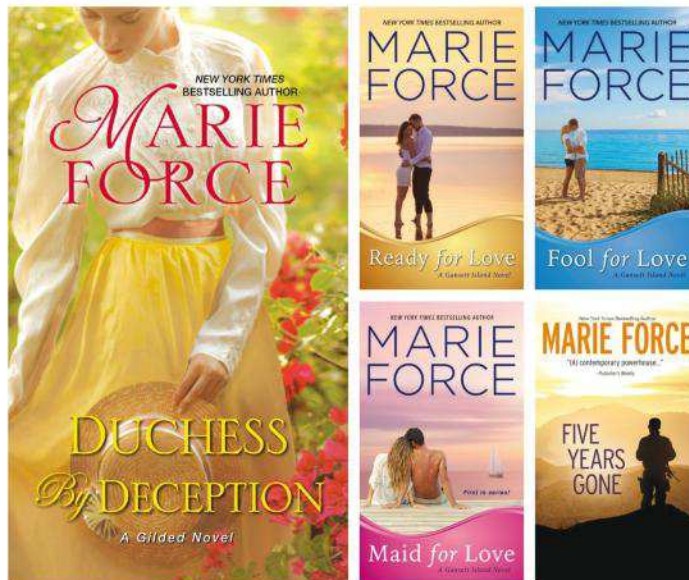
Force has found that one difference between writing contemporary romance and writing historical romance (in this case, set in the Edwardian era) involves navigating the social mores of another time. "The early 20th century was an

exciting period of innovation and modernization," Force says. Her research led her to read sources on 1902 England to craft the novel. "The duke featured in *Duchess* is a forward-looking peer who many think is eccentric because of the innovations he chooses to invest in," Force says. "He's quite a bit ahead of his time, so that made him fun to write."

Force has no plans to stop writing her contemporary romance series. She continues to see the advantages to both indie and traditional publishing models. She's excited to have Kensington behind her on some previously published and forthcoming original novels, including *Five Years Gone*, a stand-alone project that

Force will self-release as an e-book, following Kensington's release of the trade paperback edition two weeks earlier, on September 25.

In addition to writing, Force makes time to reach out to her fans. "I host a reader weekend in my home state of Rhode Island each year," Force says, "and readers come from all over to attend and to visit Block Island, the real-life Gansett Island. There's no substitute for the personal touch with the readers who have given me this dream-come-true career."



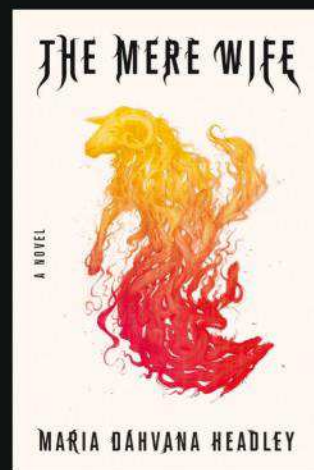
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coming. She started writing *Duchess by Deception* in 2010 but was wary of introducing a historical series early in her career, so she set it aside and focused on developing her contemporary romance brand. However, her editor at Kensington, Martin Biro, thought the time had come; when she mentioned that she had an unfinished historical manuscript, he was on board. "That led to the deal for the Gilded series," Force says, "and I'm thrilled to have the team at Kensington helping to launch this new-to-me genre." Force is

MONSTERS, HEROES, AND SUBURBAN LIFE

In her latest novel,
The Mere Wife, Maria
Dahvana Headley turns
Beowulf on its ear

By **TOBIAS CARROLL**



Maria Dahvana Headley's bold new novel, *The Mere Wife* (MCD, June), is a retelling of *Beowulf* set against the backdrop of contemporary America and dealing with subjects such as PTSD and economic inequality. But to hear Headley tell it, a key moment of inspiration came when she first sat down with Richard Yates's 1961 novel *Revolutionary Road*. "I grew up in rural, weird, survivalist Idaho," she says. "So the notion of *Revolutionary Road*, where the misery is the suburb, was jarring to me, because the suburbs to me as a kid always seemed like success and potential—a fixed life, a happy and functional life."

Headley's books span a host of styles and genres: she's written YA novels (*Magonia and Aerie*), a memoir (*The Year of Yes*), and a novel set among royalty and immortals in ancient Egypt (*Queen of Kings*).

Author Profile

The story of Beowulf has been told and retold numerous times over the centuries. A quick primer: a monster, Grendel, menaces Herot Hall, the palace of the Danish king. A warrior, Beowulf, arrives and defeats both Grendel and his mother; later, Beowulf faces a dragon and is less lucky. Some may be familiar with Seamus Heaney's acclaimed 1999 translation, or John Gardner's revisionist 1971 novel *Grendel*.

The Mere Wife's version of Herot Hall is a suburban development built in the shadow of a mountain and on the ashes of a working-class community. And though the original story of Beowulf is largely framed as the story of two men, Headley has centered her retelling around a pair of women, and in doing so questions exactly what makes a hero heroic and what makes a monster monstrous.

Headley became aware of these issues in the narrative after looking at the original text of the poem in Old English. (Her own verse translation of *Beowulf* is due to be published in 2019.) "I was writing this book in 2015, so we were at the beginning of the Trump moment—we were at the beginning of knowing that some of these politics were starting to shift and that people were behind it—and I was interested in that notion of that kind of hero," she says. She points out the same word has been translated variously as *hero* and *monster* from the original. "It's the same word used for Beowulf, Grendel, and Grendel's mother," Headley adds. "The feminine version of it is usually translated as *bag* or *monster*; the masculine version, for Beowulf, is translated as *hero*, but it's the same word." It's out of that linguistic ambiguity that much of the power of this novel arises.

The Mere Wife opens in the aftermath of war: Dana, a soldier, is taken captive by extremists and mysteriously escapes death. She returns to her hometown pregnant and gives birth to Gren; the two then take refuge within the mountain outside of Herot Hall. "I was thinking about the ways that we make war on the backs of people who are marginalized within the war, even as soldiers," Headley says, citing the rescue of Jessica Lynch, who was taken prisoner during the Iraq War, and the media narrative that surrounded it as one inspiration for this aspect of her novel.

"When I started to research the discussion of translations for Grendel's mother, I thought, 'Oh, it's all there. This is a soldier who has PTSD. This is a veteran,'" Headley says. It's Dana's scars, literal and metaphorical, that cause her to keep her son Gren—who even from a young age seems somehow different from other children—away from the world.

"This is a book about the creation of monsters—because of confusion, uncertainty, racist fears, and fears of the other," Headley notes. "Even within her, [Dana] has a fear that is pretty justified: that her son will be seen as so other that he will be killed."

This mother-son pair, Dana and Gren, exists in sharp contrast to another: Willa, who is married to the wealthy suburban developer, and her son, Dylan. Each mother is intent on protecting her son, while the two children secretly become friends.

It's at this point in the narrative that *The Mere Wife's* Beowulf counterpart arrives. "The story of Beowulf to me is interesting because in the original, Beowulf is a flawed man searching for validation of his masculinity," Headley says.

In the novel, Beowulf becomes Ben Woolf, a veteran small-town police officer in way over his head. The fact that he shares a surname with Virginia Woolf is no coincidence. "I'm interested in the way that Woolf wrote about heroic narrative, really," Headley says. "I'm interested in how she shaped her own heroic narrative. The list of really, really famous female writers is not as long as it should be, but she's one of them, and I thought it would be interesting to align Ben and his ongoing discomfort with her."

For Headley, there was no shortage of ways in which the story of Beowulf overlapped with contemporary concerns and anxieties. "One of the things that I'm constantly thinking about is the way that hero and villain myths have shaped the culture that we live in," she says, "and also the ways that we justify ourselves in terms of being allowed to colonize and gentrify aggressively, allowed to resegregate, and the ways that we make that seem plausible to ourselves—the way that we justify police violence, another hero-villain motif."

Early in our conversation, Headley described her childhood as having survivalist elements. Much of *The Mere Wife* consists of scenes of a mother and son living in a harsh environment. "It was very easy for me to write those parts from my own experience as a child being raised with a father who is very intelligent and very unhinged," Headley says. "I don't necessarily think that Dana is very unhinged. I think she's logical. She knows what the world is like, and she's afraid, and she's taking extreme measures. But my father was a person who was very tempted by the world, but he also felt that the world was going to come and create giant problems. He was not your traditional survivalist."

As Headley wrote and revised her novel, the state of American politics continued to inform its shape. "It was already a political book, but then I would say it became more political," she says. "Because just the knowledge of how easy it is to institute an other, with just a few words—to say, 'That person is a monster'... That's what we've been looking at now for the last couple of years: constant declarations of monsterhood."

In *The Mere Wife*, Headley finds an ideal balance between the accumulated weight of old stories and the contemporary issues keeping some people awake at night. For her, that's an essential part of the power of storytelling—something she's especially learned through her writings for younger readers.

"You can change the world with stories," Headley says. "These stories changed the world. *Beowulf* changed the world. So I'm maybe slightly utopian in that regard." ■

Tobias Carroll is the author of the novel Reel and the story collection Transitory.

Reviews

Fiction

★ Dog Symphony

Sam Munson. New Directions, \$13.95 trade paper (144p) ISBN 978-0-8112-2768-1

A historian of prison architecture attends a conference in Buenos Aires and gets sucked into a surreal neighborhood patrolled by dogs in this clever novel from Munson (*The November Criminals*). Boris Leonidovich, a professor from an unnamed university in North America, has come to Argentina for a conference at the request of his colleague and sometimes lover, Dr. Ana Mariategui. But when he arrives, Ana is nowhere to be found. She is missing from his scheduled lecture on the Butyrka prison, as well as the opening reception for the conference. After misplacing his keys to the pension where he's staying, Boris wanders Buenos Aires in search of Ana and ends up following a pack of stray dogs that begins to grow as the dogs meander through the night. Two flower vendors Boris befriends explain that the dogs come from a crack in the wall of a cemetery and only started appearing after a recent epidemic. All the citizens place two bowls for the dogs—one for water, one for meat—and everywhere Boris goes he hears the same song being whistled and playing from radios. “Dog Symphony,” a cab driver tells him. With subtle humor and hypnotic prose (“my visual field fishbowed as I dragged sandy detritus of another sleepless night from my eyes”), Munson’s strange, highly stylized story morphs into a wry critique of authoritarian nationalism in the vein of Eugene Ionesco’s *Rhinoceros*. (Aug.)

Certain American States

Catherine Lacey. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$26 (208p) ISBN 978-0-374-26589-2

Lacey explores the effects of solitude and the strains of relationships in her stellar first story collection (after novels *Nobody Is Ever Missing* and *The Answers*). “Violations” gives readers a neurotic ex-husband looking for himself in his ex-wife’s fiction. In “ur heck box,” a mother



Tsitsi Dangarembga's This Mournable Body is a piercing novel of hard-earned bitterness and disillusionment (reviewed on p. 39).

living in Texas complicates her adult daughter’s life when she moves to New York. The title story chronicles a woman’s difficult relationship with the godfather who raised her. These stories of modern complexity and nearly Dickensian emotional heft go on to incorporate the stress of dealing with stray dogs (“Because You Have To”), a widow trying belatedly to divest herself of her husband’s clothes (“Please Take”), an adjunct art teacher and her apathetic students (“Learning”), a depressed and impulsive woman’s attempts to meet her family’s expectations (“Family Physics”), and even a life laid bare through the device of an internet quiz (“The Four Immeasurables and Twenty New Immeasurables”). On display is Lacey’s trademark handle on the plight of characters who feel lost in their own lives, as well as her ability to enter the minds of her harried protagonists, making this collection a strong new showcase for her fiction. (Aug.)

Baby, You’re Gonna Be Mine

Kevin Wilson. Ecco, \$25.99 (288p) ISBN 978-0-06-245052-4

In the world of Wilson’s darkly funny short stories, children and deer die, and unhappy, helpless people drink and do irresponsible things. Wilson (*Perfect Little World*) shows people managing as best they can: trying to survive video game zombies when the rest of their life is too horrible to fix (“Scroll Through the Weapons”), helping selfish grown children because no one else would love them enough to do so (“Housewarming” and

the title story), and coping with the horror of adolescence by making horror movies (“The Horror We Made”). “No Joke, This Is Going to Be Painful” involves pariahs ice fighting, but its title would work for virtually every story in the collection. The exception is the one weak link, “The Lost Baby,” which taps into a pain so deep that neither humor nor the human ability to occasionally not be awful can redeem anything. The rest stick with the reader and show a terrible world made less so, sometimes, by human contact, even though humans were usually the problem in the first place. (Aug.)

Rust & Stardust

T. Greenwood. St. Martin’s, \$26 (356p) ISBN 978-1-250-16419-3

Greenwood (*The Forever Bridge*) reimagines the true-crime story that inspired Nabokov’s *Lolita* in this riveting suspense tale that takes readers across state lines and through several years of terror. Eleven-year-old Sally Horner is a shy misfit longing for friendship when Frank LaSalle, pretending to be a cop, tricks her into thinking he could have her arrested after he observes her stealing a notebook. He then inveigles her into his custody and deceives her disabled, widowed mother as to his true identity and intentions. It’s all so chillingly plausible that, like Sally, the reader half-believes LaSalle’s lies; his assaults on Sally’s psyche are at least as troubling as his assaults on her young body as he takes the girl from Camden, N.J., to San Jose, Calif. A minor but important theme concerns the girls whose bullying and ostracism of Sally rendered her more vulnerable to LaSalle’s predation. Yet grace touches this dark tale, too, in the form of genuinely kind characters whose concern is a balm to the difficult events of the book—including Sally’s brother-in-law, whose dogged determination to find Sally drives the search, and a neighbor who turns out to be a lifeline. Greenwood’s story will spellbind readers as the terrors mounts. (Aug.)

Don’t Send Flowers

Martín Solares. Black Cat, \$16 trade paper (488p) ISBN 978-0-8021-2815-7

Solares follows *The Black Minutes* with a gripping crime story set amid Mexico’s escalating drug cartel wars and a nation-

wide atmosphere of police and judicial corruption. Extortion, kidnapping, and wholesale murder rule the Gulf city of La Eternidad in 2014. When a wealthy businessman's teenage daughter is kidnapped, he reluctantly asks ex-cop Carlos Treviño for help. However, because he was an honest cop, Carlos is hiding from his most dangerous enemy: Police Chief Margarito González, a corrupt, vicious killer with a grudge. Carlos takes the case but knows he cannot trust anyone—certainly not the police, the military, the American consul, the man who hired him, or even the loyal bodyguard assigned to help him. His investigation is full of menace and contradictions, pitting him against merciless narco gangs and the equally ruthless and greedy officials who protect them. Betrayal is a constant threat, and Carlos knows he's on borrowed time. He is a good detective, bold and smart, and soon realizes the kidnapping is much more complex and sinister than he first thought. This is an excellent, frightening portrayal of the breadth and depth of Mexico's cartel violence and systemic corruption. *Agent: Veronica Gagno, Schavelzon Graham Agency. (Aug.)*

This Mournable Body

Tsitsi Dangarembga. Graywolf (FSG, dist.), \$16 trade paper (296p) ISBN 978-1-55597-812-9

Set in Zimbabwe at the end of the 20th century, Dangarembga's heartbreaking and piercing latest follows Tambudzai—the protagonist of her novel *Nervous Conditions*—as she wearily approaches middle age. After leaving an unfulfilling job at an advertising agency, Tambudzai finds herself living in a Harare youth hostel. She moves from position to position and home to home after leaving the hostel (“Concerned not to let your newest opportunity float away, you are constantly on the lookout for handholds, like low-lying branches above a raging river, which you can grasp first to balance yourself and, subsequently, to heave yourself upward”), alternating between pridefulness and woeful self-hatred—eventually taking a job teaching biology at a girls' school that requires no specific training—and fantasizing about the life she'll someday lead. When her former boss from the advertising agency offers her a position at a glamorous new ecotourism venture, Tambudzai leaps at the opportunity, not realizing how

[Q&A]

PW TALKS WITH CHRISTINA DALCHER

The Limits of Language

Dalcher's novel *Vox* (Berkley, Aug.; reviewed on p. 40) is set in a near-future America whose government limits women's speech to 100 words per day.

Previously, you had primarily written short stories and flash fiction. Why did you decide to write a novel?

The first seed of this was a contest in early 2017 sponsored by *The Molotov Cocktail*, an online magazine that publishes very dark flash fiction, and the theme was a doomsday scenario. So that's where I got the idea of working with aphasia and this bioagent that could just wipe out language. And then, a little later, Upper Rubber Boot Books put out a call for dystopian short stories featuring a female protagonist with a specific skill. So I sort of turned my original flash fiction piece around a little and created this neurologist on the brink of curing aphasia—which is very speculative—and then the irony was that her own speech was taken away.

So *Vox* was not a direct reaction to the political climate?

Everybody in the world must think that I was writing this as a response to the political situation in the U.S., which is not the case. I was primarily looking at the culture of domesticity and the separation of gender roles, and how every step forward for women results in a resurgence of that domestic culture. So that's where the scaffolding came from. The Trump administration just provided convenient timing.

How do you think your background as a linguist influences your fiction writing?

I like to play with language, and my

linguistics background informs my writing, especially in my shorter fiction. It's something unique, a little bit of an advantage—not everyone who writes fiction comes from that background. I know physicists, for instance, who write really experimental flash fiction modeled on calculus or the laws of thermodynamics.

And then, of course, language—or its disruption—is at the heart of the novel's plot.

The only thing, aside from our brain size, that separates us from the rest of the animal kingdom, including our closest relatives, the great apes, is linguistic

capacity. Other animals can communicate—dogs can bark and bees can do their little dance—but they don't have language. Communication and language are different things. So the idea of a bioagent that would induce this kind of fluent aphasia, where people could speak but nothing has any real meaning, was really terrifying.

Do you see your novel as being informed by or in conversation with other feminist dystopian narratives?

I did read *The Handmaid's Tale* shortly after it came out, and that's one hell of a novel. But I'd say I was more influenced by Atwood's style than by anything else—she writes these scenes that are like pieces of prose poetry or flash fiction—and I try to do that sometimes. At heart, though, I really wrote a thriller. It's my favorite kind of thing to write.

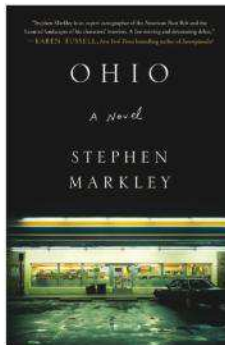
—NORAH PIEHL



Ohio

Stephen Markley. Simon & Schuster, \$26 (496p) ISBN 978-1-5011-7447-6

In Markley's standout debut novel (following nonfiction works *Publish This Book* and *Tales of Iceland*), four former high school classmates return to their Ohio hometown to make amends. Once a bastion of steel-mill industry, New Canaan has been corroded by economic downturn and opiates; it's pervaded by a sense of disillusionment shared by the four, whose rudderless adult lives pale alongside the blinding lights of their adolescence. Over the course of one night—interlaced with high school flashbacks—the four settle old scores and uncover some of the town's nefarious secrets. There's Bill Ashcraft, who drives into town to deliver a package to a familiar recipient; Stacey Moore, a doctoral candidate who's sucked into the mystery of her former lover's disappearance; veteran Dan Eaton, who returns from Afghanistan with a prosthetic eyeball and emotional wounds; and Tina Ross, who confronts a violent part of her past. As the night progresses, the long-buried truth behind a horrifying town legend takes shape, offering a window into the raw forces that shape the town and its residents. Markley's novel is alternately disturbing and gorgeous, providing a broad view of the anxieties of a post-9/11 Middle America and the complexities of the humans who navigate them. *Agent: Susan Golomb, Writers House. (Aug.)*



Horse

Talley English. Knopf, \$26.95 (336p) ISBN 978-1-101-87433-2

In English's uneven debut, high schooler Teagan French lives an idyllic life at Blue View, her family's Virginia farm. Her days consist of riding horses; campfires in the woods with her best friend, Grace; and outdoor dinners under cloudless skies. Teagan lives with her mother, the strong-willed, horse-loving Susanna; her older brother, the kind but distant Charlie; and her hard-to-please father, Robert. However, Robert seems less like himself every day. When he brings home an obstinate new gelding, Obsidian, and then abruptly leaves his family for another woman, Obsidian is christened Ian and given to Teagan. As her family crumbles around her, Teagan chooses a new path for herself at an equestrian-focused boarding school a few hours away. She deals with pain and heartbreak there with a new cast of roommates and friends, all the while battling to train the strong-willed Ian, hoping to find something she can truly trust amid the turmoil. With short, punchy chapters and both first- and third-person narration from Teagan, the novel moves well, but the story can feel unfocused; scenes of boarding school antics are highly detailed, while major moments—like the abrupt and dramatic ending—are vague. English is a talented writer whose strong, striking sentences compensate for the weaker aspects of the story. *(Aug.)*

The Crimson Heirlooms

Hunter Dennis. A-R-B Books, \$16.99 trade paper (470p) ISBN 978-0-9994936-0-1

Dennis's debut is an ambitious, sweeping epic of French history between 1776 and 1832 that follows two men decades apart who are loosely connected through two elusive, fabled heirlooms—a priceless necklace called the Cross of Nantes and lyrics to the devil's song, said to contain a secret. Set mainly in France and Saint-Domingue (now Haiti), the story begins with Xavier Traversier,

low she will be asked to sink, turning her rural background and her national culture into photo opportunities for European visitors. Tambudzai is an outstanding and memorable character; her struggles always feel real, even with the use of a second-person point of view. This is a smartly told novel of hard-earned bitterness and disillusionment. *(Aug.)*

Vox

Christina Dalcher. Berkley, \$26 (336p) ISBN 978-0-440-00078-5

In her provocative debut, linguist Dalcher imagines a near future in which speech and language—or the withholding thereof—are instruments of control. The election of a conservative president with a charismatic (and psychotic) religious advisor is merely the final straw in a decades-long trend toward repression and authoritarianism. For years, cognitive linguist Jean

McClellan, a well-educated white woman, chose to immerse herself in academia rather than become politically active, even as signs of authoritarianism were proliferating. Now, however, a year after the election, women in the United States have been limited to speaking no more than 100 words per day or face painful consequences. When the President's brother suffers an accident that affects his brain's speech centers, Jean might be able to leverage her expertise to restore her status. Dalcher's narrative raises questions about the links between language and authority; most chilling is the specter of young girls being starved of language and, consequently, the capacity to think critically. The novel's muddled climax and implausible denouement fail to live up to its intriguing premise. Nevertheless, Dalcher's novel carries an undeniably powerful message. *(Aug.)*

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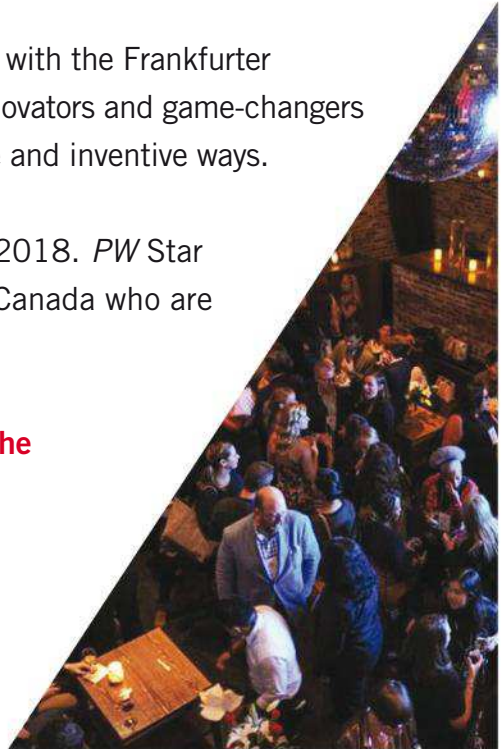
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★ His Favorites

Kate Walbert. Scribner, \$22 (160p) ISBN 978-1-4767-9939-1

Walbert (*A Short History of Women*) compresses into this taut, powerful novel one woman's painful recollection of her sexual relationship at age 15 with her 34-year-old high school English teacher. The summer before her sophomore year in 1978, Jo Hadley overturns a golf cart during a late-night drunken joyride, accidentally killing her best friend. Haunted by guilt and a pariah in her hometown, Jo is sent to a private school outside Boston, where Jo's first roommate promptly leaves school following a bullying incident. Jo's time at the school is complicated when she attracts the attention of popular English instructor Master Aikens. As one of Master's favorites, Jo experiences one-on-one mentoring, encouragement, cruelty, plus sex in Jo's dorm room and Master's home and car. Jo informs a school administrator, who questions her credibility and admonishes her, insinuating such accusations damage her future prospects. Jo narrates with brutal honesty, using declarative sentences (Master's preferred style). Her story, filled with rage and regret and intensified by its searing portrait of self-aware, self-destructive teenage girls, provides a case history in male-female relationships built on imbalance of power. *Agent: Eric Simonoff, WME Entertainment. (Aug.)*



Tommy James and the Shondells blast from transistor radios—will find plenty to like. *Agent: Anne Hawkins, John Hawkins & Assoc. (Sept.)*

★ The Spy of Venice

Benet Brandreth. Pegasus Crime, \$25.95 (448p) ISBN 978-1-68177-798-6

What if William Shakespeare was an intelligence agent before he became a playwright? That's the clever premise of Brandreth's impressive first novel. In 1585, the 20-year-old William, who's been working half-heartedly in the family glove trade, leaves Stratford-upon-Avon at the urging of his father after the discovery of his affair with a young woman, Alice Hunt, whose father, a steward to the local MP, could do him harm. William heads to London, where he becomes an actor and meets Sir Henry Carr, the English ambassador to Venice. Sir Henry, who's embarking on a delicate diplomatic mission, is looking for actors to be part of the delegation. With his country under threat from Spain, France, and the Netherlands, he hopes that the offer of a trade deal will persuade the Venetians to ally with England. William signs on and travels to Venice, where he must contend with various perils, including Catholic assassins. Brandreth, the rhetoric coach to the Royal Shakespeare Company, plausibly and imaginatively fills a gap in the historical record of the Bard's life. *Agent: Ivan Mulcahy, MMB Creative (U.K.). (Aug.)*

The Iceman

P.T. Deutermann. St. Martin's, \$26.99 (320p) ISBN 978-1-250-18137-4

At the start of this exciting WWII naval thriller set in 1942 from Deutermann (*Red Swan*), Lt. Comdr. Malachi Stormes launches a submarine attack on a German U-boat base in France that destroys three enemy subs. His daring earns him a promotion and the command of the USS *Firefish*, a new long-range sub based in Perth, Australia, replacing a timid skipper more concerned with preserving torpedoes than engaging foes. The *Firefish*'s crew members are unprepared for his aggressive and unorthodox tactics. The phlegmatic captain earns the nickname "the Iceman" for his cool detachment, even taking time to grab a smoke while an enemy destroyer bears down on his

French heir to a failing dynasty in Nantes, who goes into shipping and the African slave trade to restore his family's fortune. The Guerrier family of Saint-Domingue were in possession of the Cross of Nantes; years later, a fateful meeting between Estelle Guerrier and Xavier forged a connection between the families and the missing necklace. Decades later, Jake Loring is an American studying in Paris who leads a foiled rebellion against the king and is arrested. A stranger frees him on the condition that he find both artifacts, called the Crimson Heirlooms, a journey that takes him around France and to Ireland, culminating in Jake's discovery of a shocking secret that connects the two heirlooms, and a newfound suspicion that his involvement is not a coincidence. In this remarkable, webby tale, Dennis uses the heirlooms as the link to weave Xavier, Jake, and many other story lines into the politics, religion, social issues, culture, and ideas of the time. Meticulous research, sharp historical detail, and a deepening mystery results in an exciting story. A cliffhanger ending ensures a sequel. *(BookLife)*

Mystery/Thriller

Gold Dust: A Red River Mystery

Reavis Z. Wortham. Poisoned Pen, \$26.95 (364p) ISBN 978-1-4642-0961-1; \$15.95 trade paper ISBN 978-1-4642-0963-5

In Wortham's entertaining, well-crafted seventh Red River mystery set in late 1960s Center Springs, Tex. (after 2016's *Unravelled*), two CIA agents persuade a local crop duster to spray an unknown substance that they call Gold Dust. They claim it's to test weather patterns, but Constable Ned Parker and his old friend Tom Bell, a retired Texas Ranger, believe the spray may be spreading illness. Meanwhile, Sheriff Cody Parker and his deputies investigate a rancher's murder that could be related. And Ned's 14-year-old granddaughter, Pepper Parker, starts a rumor about buried treasure that sparks a gold rush in the area. Ned and Tom pursue the CIA operatives to Washington, D.C., in their quest for justice. Their triumph may be farfetched, but it's a pleasure to watch them deal with orneriness as well as just plain evil. Readers nostalgic for this period—songs by the Monkees and

boat. But a family history of alcoholism and violence back home in Kentucky haunts the captain and could adversely affect his judgment. Deutermann packs authentic information on submarine tactics and naval warfare in between the taut underwater action. Fans of old-school submarine novels like *Run Silent, Run Deep* will be rewarded. *Agent: Nick Ellison, Nick Ellison Agency. (Aug.)*

Trust Me

Hank Phillippi Ryan. Forge, \$25.99 (400p)
ISBN 978-0-7653-9307-4

Grief-stricken journalist Mercer Hennessey, the heroine of this intriguing standalone from Mary Higgins Clark Award-winner Ryan (*Say No More* and four other Jane Ryland novels), believes there are “no more good days” after her husband and three-year-old daughter die in a car crash, until she’s assigned to write a true crime book about the Baby Boston murder trial. She gains a renewed sense of purpose—to avenge two-year-old Tasha Nicole Bryant, whose body was dumped in Boston harbor. Tasha Nicole’s mother, Ashlyn Bryant, is accused of her daughter’s murder, and Mercer is sure she’s guilty. But when Ashlyn is found not guilty, Mercer must write a redemption story instead. After spending time with Ashlyn, Mercer begins to wonder whether Ashlyn is in fact innocent—and whether the book will be Ashlyn’s redemption story or her own. Despite some sluggish moments, this sinister tale twists to a satisfying conclusion. Ryan casts a revealing light on media sensationalism, ethics in journalism, and the nature of truth. *Agent: Lisa Gallagher, DeFiore & Co. (Aug.)*

The Other Woman

Sandie Jones. Minotaur, \$26.99 (304p)
ISBN 978-1-250-19198-4

To smitten Emily Havistock, the narrator of British author Jones’s engrossing-if-flawed first novel, sexy London IT recruiter Adam Banks seems like the perfect catch—until she discovers Adam has a pretty big catch himself: Pammie, his meddlesome widowed mum with whom he seems hopelessly enmeshed. As Emily becomes painfully aware, her sexagenarian adversary will stop at nothing to

split up the couple (including faking a breast cancer diagnosis), and, Emily starts to suspect, might even have had a hand in the death of Adam’s previous girlfriend. Far from having the desired effect, however, Pammie’s machinations make feisty Emily all the more determined to land her guy, a single-minded focus that leads her to ignore glaring warning signs that the volatile Adam might not really be the one for her—or indeed the man she thinks he is. The startling if unbelievable 180 at the end of the road will spin readers’ heads, but not enough to compensate for all the contrivance to engineer it. Still, fans of plot-driven psychological thrillers will enjoy the ride. *200,000-copy announced first printing. Agent: Tanera Simons, Darley Anderson (U.K.). (Aug.)*

Bad Man

Dathan Auerbach. Blumhouse, \$26.95
(320p) ISBN 978-0-385-54292-0

Auerbach follows his first novel, 2012’s *Penpal*, with a dark and disturbing horror thriller set in the Florida Panhandle. One day, 15-year-old Ben takes his three-year-old brother, Eric, to a local grocery store, where Eric drops his stuffed rhino, Stampie, into a restroom toilet. While Ben is cleaning Stampie, Eric vanishes. Five years later, Ben is working as a night stocker in the same store that Eric disappeared in and remains intent on finding his brother. When a coworker informs Ben that he saw Eric months earlier, Ben’s obsession becomes manic and he begins seeing others—including his manager, the old woman who runs the bakery, and a coworker—as potential conspirators. Readers will be reminded of the young Stephen King (the store’s baler, for example, evokes King’s industrial laundry press machine in “The Mangler”), but the story unravels at the conclusion, with one too many strained sequences. The novel’s rich imagery suggests Auerbach is capable of doing better next time. *(Aug.)*

The Washington Decree

Jussi Adler-Olsen, trans. from the Danish by Steve Schein. Dutton, \$28 (592p) ISBN 978-1-5247-4252-2

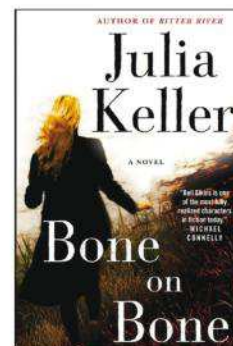
First published in Denmark in 2006, Adler-Olsen’s far-fetched political thriller

plays out in a near-future Washington, D.C., where newly elected President Bruce Jansen tries to centralize power by suspending parts of the Constitution. Convinced the country is headed for ruin after his wife’s assassination, Jansen takes several measures to severely limit civil rights. Meanwhile, wealthy hotel magnate Bud Curtis, a political rival of the president, is arrested for the killing of Jansen’s wife. The arrest complicates the career of Curtis’s daughter, Doggie, who has worked for Jansen for many years. As her father’s execution date nears—the death penalty runs rampant in this milieu—Doggie abandons her White House job and sets out to prove her father’s innocence. The ponderous plot moves in ways that strain belief. Fans of the author’s long-running Department Q crime series (*The Scarred Woman*, etc.) won’t find much to like. *Agent: Rudi Urban Rasmussen, Politiken Literary Agency (Denmark). (Aug.)*

★ Bone on Bone

Julia Keller. Minotaur, \$26.99 (304p) ISBN 978-1-250-19092-5

The inhabitants of the dying town of Acker’s Gap, W.Va., face only bleak prospects in Keller’s beautifully written seventh Bell Elkins novel (after 2017’s *Fast Falls the Night*). Adults close themselves off emotionally, clutching their despair, while young people are likely to slip into hopeless drug addiction—or dealing. Wheelchair-bound former sheriff’s deputy Jake Oakes and just-out-of-prison former prosecutor Bell, who was put behind bars after confessing to her abusive father’s murder, also appear to have no useful futures, but they get a new focus by investigating the shooting murder of banker Brett Topping. The police question Topping’s 19-year-old drug-addicted son, Tyler, but once Tyler



is cleared, along with his ultra-violent dealer, Deke Foley, suspicion shifts to more seemingly wholesome members of the community. Despite the pervading melancholy,

[Q&A]

PW TALKS WITH BENET BRANDRETH

Countermeasure for Countermeasure

Young Shakespeare becomes a spy in British rhetoric coach Brandreth's first novel, *The Spy of Venice* (Pegasus Crime, July; reviewed on p. 42).

What led you to imagine Shakespeare as an espionage agent?

My first question was how the son of a glover from a small town in the middle of England should have found himself in London, a player and a playwright, and more than that—the greatest master of the English language the world has ever seen. The beginning was unpromising, and the result outstanding. Something must have inspired him.

There are various theories for what happened between the date of his twins' baptism in 1585 in Stratford-upon-Avon and his first mention in the records of the London theater scenes in Robert Greene's *Groates Worth of Wit* as "upstart crow," but

one captured my imagination—that he had gone to Italy, to Venice. If so, how had he done so? Surely only in the entourage of a wealthy man, the English ambassador? And from there to the idea of him as a spy was a small leap. So many Englishmen abroad were spying that it was almost a matter of remark not to be.

We are distracted by our modern vision of playwrights as slightly tweedy figures, but the playwrights of the Elizabethan era were a more dangerous bunch, at the margins of society, such as Christopher Marlowe, who was, of course, famously a spy and murdered in a

tavern brawl in Deptford.

Did your research into the period yield anything unexpected?

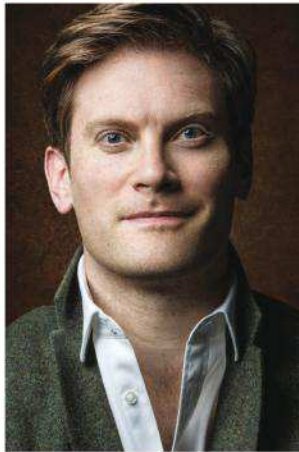
The things that surprised me most were about the history of Italy at the time. There is a tendency in the U.K. to have a very Anglocentric view of history, and yet for most of history we played bit parts in the great dynastic battles of Europe. At the same time,

Italy was full of the most fabulous characters, vengeful popes, murderous wives, brilliant poet-courtisans. Very little authorial invention was required to fill my story with drama and remarkable characters.

Has your work as an intellectual property lawyer influenced your writing of fiction?

My interest is in language and its power to move others. That is the essence of rhetoric—the art of persuasion, which was the sum and substance of Shakespeare's education. It was knowledge of language that got me involved in the Royal Shakespeare Company, working with the actors on how Shakespeare understood and used language. That same knowledge I deploy in the courtroom, hopefully to good effect. I think there is considerable overlap between that and my writing. A good advocate tells his client's story; the narrative matters even in dry areas of the law, like patents and trademarks.

—LENNY PICKER



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characters stubbornly struggle to rediscover purpose for their lives and to pin down responsibility for personal failures. This thoughtful, painfully empathetic story will long linger in the reader's memory. *Agent: Lisa Gallagher, DeFiore & Co. (Aug.)*

The Second Coming

John Heubusch. Howard, \$26 (384p) ISBN 978-1-5011-5572-7

Heubusch's debut, 2017's *The Shroud Conspiracy*, tells the story of the birth of a baby cloned from DNA found on the Shroud of Turin. Unfortunately, the blood droplets turn out not to have come from Jesus. The resulting child, Hans, is an evil being known as a Watcher, who curses the world with a terrible pandemic. How can this plague be eliminated and the Watcher defeated? In this disappointing sequel, forensic anthropologist Jon Bondurant, an atheist, and believer Domenika Josef decide to solve the problem by cloning another child from blood taken from a different Christian relic. When this new child, Christopher, heals a bunch of sick children in a hospital, it's clear that this time they've got it right. Thus the stage is set for the inevitable showdown between Chris and Hans, but readers must endure loads of predictable religious thriller action before the boys grow up. When the big battle finally arrives, it comes as a brief, unsatisfying letdown. *Da Vinci Code* fans can safely take a pass on this one. *Agent: W. Scott Lamb. (Aug.)*

River of Secrets: A Wallace Hartman Mystery

Roger Johns. Minotaur, \$26.99 (304p) ISBN 978-1-250-11012-1

The cardboard character of the lead—Baton Rouge, La., police detective Wallace Hartman—and a relatively uncomplicated mystery mar Johns's sequel to 2017's *Dark River Rising*. When Herbert Marioneaux, a white state senator whose past is filled with "controversial views" regarding racial segregation, is murdered, clues point to disgraced criminal lawyer and political activist Eddie Pitkin, who happens to be black. Hartman, who has a close friend related to Pitkin, investigates and soon becomes

enmeshed in a media storm centered on the apparently wrongful arrest of yet another black man and gross police misconduct. Examining the underbelly of Louisiana culture, Hartman discovers more than a few closed-minded people with highly dangerous agendas. The action builds to an abrupt and unsatisfying conclusion, and the emotionally muted writing style doesn't help matters. Not many readers will feel like following Hartman's further adventures. *Agent: Paula Munier, Talcott Notch Literary Agency. (Aug.)*

The Thief of All Light

Bernard Schaffer. Kensington, \$26 (368p)
ISBN 978-1-4967-1713-9

Set in rural Western Pennsylvania, this middling series launch from Schaffer (*Superbia*) introduces Carrie Santero, a rookie small-town cop hoping to move up to detective. When a young woman goes missing, a man is murdered in the parking lot of a gay bar, and Carrie's best friend and the friend's daughter disappear, Carrie's boss, Bill Waylon, calls in the best detective he knows, his old partner, Jacob Rein, to assist in the investigation. The evidence points to a single perpetrator imitating other serial killers, what Jacob calls an omnikiller. Schaffer's experience as a police officer lends verisimilitude to the attitudes and actions of his cast—at one point the police chief explains to Carrie that coffee is the real reason that cops have been spotted at donut shops. Though Carrie is a fairly standard headstrong officer, and the villain is a typical depraved murderer, the character of Jacob is more complex, which bodes well for the sequel. The graphic violence may put off some readers. *Agent: Sharon Pelletier, Dystel, Goderich & Bourret. (Aug.)*

Beyond the Grave:

A Grim Reaper Mystery

Judy Clemens. Poisoned Pen, \$15.95 trade paper (286p) ISBN 978-1-4642-0988-8

Clemens's gently humorous fifth Grim Reaper mystery (after 2012's *Dying Echo*) takes Casey Maldonado, who's still haunted by the deaths of her husband and baby son, and her traveling companion, Death, an apparition with a penchant for old films and fancy cos-

tumes, to the small Idaho hamlet of Armstrong, "a strange town with dark undertones. Lots of old grudges, unsolved mysteries, and layers of resentment." Still suffering from bruised ribs and a blossoming black eye from a recent dustup with some small-town thugs, Casey accepts the offer of a place to stay and some part-time work from Vern and Dottie, who own Armstrong's general store and lunch counter. Soon she and Death, whom only she can see, are piecing together the reasons for a 45-year-old vendetta, which has soured local residents, as well as shining some light on more contemporary malevolence. Clemens draws the reader smoothly into this fantasy world while providing an original approach to the iconic figure of the Grim Reaper. *(Aug.)*

Toucan Keep a Secret:

A Meg Langslow Mystery

Donna Andrews. Minotaur, \$25.99 (304p)
ISBN 978-1-250-11547-8

Agatha-winner Andrews's lively 23rd Meg Langslow mystery (after 2017's *How the Finch Stole Christmas*) finds ornamental blacksmith Meg occupied with administrative duties at Trinity Episcopal Church in Caerphilly, Va., while her friend the rector, Robyn Smith, is on medical leave. In the church's place for cremated remains, Meg stumbles across the body of Junius Hagley, one of the church's more persnickety parishioners. Various remains have been disturbed, and a ring found near the body raises new questions about the long-ago van der Lynden jewel robbery. The van der Lynden son and accomplices were sent to prison, but the jewels were never recovered. Meg juggles interviews with relatives of the departed and those affected by the robbery, potential threats against a toucan present at the murder, and ways to keep her medical examiner father—an enthusiastic amateur criminologist—out of the hair of the harried police chief. Even if some readers might guess the perpetrator, they will surely enjoy a re-enactment of the robbery with earnest actors and ingenious substitutes for firearms. This long-running cozy series shows no signs of losing its freshness. *Agent: Ellen Geiger, Frances Goldin Literary Agency. (Aug.)*

★ Grandghost

Nancy Springer. Severn, \$28.99 (224p)
ISBN 978-0-7278-8792-4

At the start of this sprightly tale of longing and renewal from Edgar-winner Springer (*Dark Lie*), Beverly Vernon, a children's books illustrator who has recently settled in a small Florida Panhandle town following her husband's death, receives bad news from her literary agent in New York—her most recent book is unsalable. Depressed, she realizes that most of her contemporaries are filling their days by doting on grandchildren, something her two adult daughters are unlikely to provide. In this state of mind, she makes a start on a portrait of the ideal granddaughter: violet-eyed, golden-haired, and dressed for a party. That evening, while digging up some bricks in the backyard, she uncovers the skeleton of a small child. The following morning, Beverly notices that the portrait has been altered: the girl now has a grim expression. Is she going mad? So begins her quest to identify the buried child, whom the police believe to have been murdered. Beverly's wit and humanity keep this highly readable novel grounded when it blossoms into fully fledged fantasy. *Agent: Jennifer Weltz, Jean V. Naggar Agency. (Aug.)*

Smoking Kills

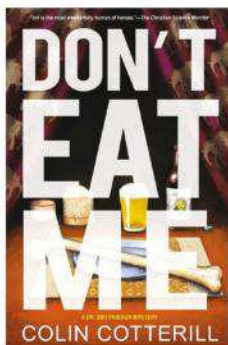
Antoine Laurain, trans. from the French by Louise Rogers-Lalaurie. Gallic, \$14.95 trade paper (208p) ISBN 978-1-910477-54-0

A smoking ban at the firm of corporate headhunter Fabrice Valentine, the narrator of this elegantly meandering crime novel from Laurain (*The President's Hat*), drives him and a few other hardcore tobacco devotees out into the streets of Paris. His wife suggests he try hypnotherapy, with the result that he ceases to enjoy smoking. Eventually, he figures out how to regain the pleasure that nicotine once afforded him through criminal means. Fabrice's memories of highlights of his smoking history include how he met his wife-to-be at an art show when she admonished him for using what he thought was a standing ashtray but was in fact an expensive art installation. Every detail is wreathed in smoke and irony—Fabrice's father, a heavy cigar user, met his death in a collision with a cigar truck on a road in Cuba. This is guaranteed fun for

★ Don't Eat Me

Colin Cotterill. Soho Crime, \$26.95 (304p) ISBN 978-1-61695-940-1

In Cotterill's excellent 13th mystery, set sometime after 1980 in the People's Democratic Republic of Laos (after 2017's *The Rat Catcher's Olympics*), Dr. Siri Pauboun, the country's national coroner, and his friend Chief Insp. Phosy Vongvichai, who's a rare honest cop, have a grisly murder to solve. A night patrol has found a skeleton at the base of the Anusawari Victory Arch belonging to a woman who was apparently eaten by animals, possibly while she was still alive. The sensitive inquiry implicates a powerful official, placing Phosy's career and life at risk. The crime may also be connected with illegal animal trafficking. A subplot involving Siri's plans to produce a film based on *War and Peace*—and his navigating of the bureaucracy to get the project green-lit—provides comic relief from what would otherwise be a grim tale. Wry prose (“Life sped by in Vientiane like a Volkswagen van on blocks”) also lightens the mood. The eccentric Siri, who's possessed by spirits (including those of a dog, his dead mother, and a transvestite fortune-teller), continues to stand out as a unique and endearing series sleuth. (Aug.)



murder him. Stone keeps the suspense high throughout. Readers will relish Jane's Machiavellian maneuvers to even the score with the unlikable Steven. (Aug.)

The Second Son

Martin Jay Weiss. Vireo, \$16.95 trade paper (232p) ISBN 978-1-947856-15-8

In filmmaker Weiss's overstuffed and underwhelming first novel, two L.A.-based entrepreneurs, twin brothers Ethan and Jack Stone, have devised a mobile app they call Stalker. “We’re going to transform the way people stalk. We’re going to be huge,” crows Ethan. Jack doesn’t share his brother’s enthusiasm and resigns. Meanwhile, the company’s anonymous financial backer pushes Ethan to release Stalker’s revolutionary facial recognition software, despite programming glitches. When Ethan returns home to look for solace from his stunning live-in girlfriend, Brooke Shaw, she’s gone, having left him only a cryptic note. Suspecting Brooke ran off with Jack, Ethan sets out to use his new software to track her down, telling himself he’s doing it just to make sure that she’s safe. He soon determines that the woman he has known as Brooke Shaw doesn’t exist. Ensuing complications include mistaken identities, identity theft, murder, kidnapping, beatings, and everyone spying electronically on everyone else. In the rushed and muddled finale, Weiss scrambles to provide a happy ending for all and sundry. Even non-computer-geeks will find this story unconvincing. Agent: Paula Munier, *Talcott Notch Literary Services*. (Aug.)

A Day in the Life of Louis Bloom: The Second McCusker Mystery

Paul Charles. Dufour, \$30 (320p) ISBN 978-0-8023-1362-1

Irish author Charles's fine sequel to 2014's *Down on Cypress Avenue* finds Brendy McCusker, a retired Ulster detective inspector who sometimes helps the Belfast police, and Det. Insp. Lily O'Carroll interviewing Elizabeth Bloom, the wife of Queen's University lecturer Louis Bloom, in her living room late one night. Four hours earlier, Louis abruptly walked out of the house. Normally, 48 hours have to pass before the police can respond to a missing person's report, but Elizabeth's sister, Angela, is the wife of Supt. Niall Larkin, who's in effect the boss

all smokers who have vowed to go down fighting. (Aug.)

Death in Shangri-La

Yigal Zur, trans. from the Hebrew by Sara Kitai. Oceanview, \$26.95 (272p) ISBN 978-1-60809-299-4

Zur makes his U.S. debut with an intriguing if flawed thriller. Dotan Naor, a retired Israeli operative, specializes in rescuing fellow countrymen who have gotten into trouble abroad. After Israeli arms dealer Willy Mizrachi is found beheaded in Delhi, Naor, who has just returned to Israel from Mumbai, is visited by the police, who want to know why Naor's name was in the dead man's appointment book. Naor doesn't reveal that Mizrachi beseeched him a year earlier for help with Mizrachi's son, who gave up a promising legal career to join a Buddhist monastery in northern India. When Naor learns that the murder coincided with a series of terror attacks in India targeting Israeli tourists, he agrees to return to that country to investigate. He's joined by intelligence agent Maya Kfir, who, conveniently for Naor's libido, happens to be a knockout. Zur doesn't make suspension of disbelief easy, especially after saddling his lead with a backstory that includes a martial

arts match against Vladimir Putin at China's legendary Shaolin Monastery. Readers with a tolerance for genre clichés will be satisfied. Agent: Murray Weiss, *Catalyst Literary Management*. (Aug.)

Jane Doe

Victoria Helen Stone. Lake Union, \$24.95 (268p) ISBN 978-1-50390-089-9

Revenge drives this fascinating thriller from romance author Stone (*Evelyn, After*). Jane, an admitted sociopath, temporarily relocates from Kuala Lumpur, where she's a successful import/export attorney, to Minneapolis, where her best (and only) friend, Meg Peterson, whom she became close to in college, was living until Meg committed suicide. Jane holds Meg's boyfriend, Steven Hepsworth, responsible. She knows Steven emotionally abused Meg by repeatedly breaking up with her and wooing her back with promises of marriage and the wonderful life they would share, until he precipitously ended the relationship for good. Jane, who has gained employment as a data entry clerk in the firm in which Steven is a middle manager, proceeds to ingratiate herself into his life, determined either to take away what is most important to him as Steven did to her, or, more drastically, to

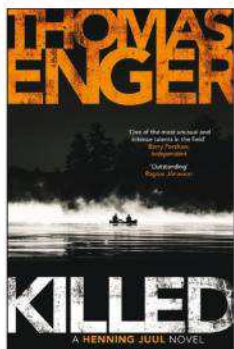
of both McCusker and O'Carroll. On receiving Elizabeth's distress call, Angela persuaded her husband to act immediately. McCusker and O'Carroll's search for Louie leads them to Queen's University, where they discover a host of suspects, including scheming academics and a shady American. The crime solving takes a backseat to an examination of a tangle of unusual relationships, starting with the Blooms'. Louis's lectures on love were famous, but he and Elizabeth, as fond as they were of each other, stopped having sex early in their marriage. Charles's skillful depiction of the many sides of love and its strange bypaths lifts this clever novel well above the genre average. (Aug.)



★ Killed

Thomas Enger, trans. from the Norwegian by Kari Dickson. Orenda (IPG, dist.), \$14.95 trade paper (276p) ISBN 978-1-91-063399-1

In Enger's searing fifth and final novel featuring Oslo investigative reporter Henning Juul (after 2017's *Cursed*), Henning, who was scarred in body and soul by the apartment fire that killed his six-year-old son two years earlier in 2007, obsessively pursues the criminals responsible for his son's death. Meanwhile, malig-



nant figures relentlessly stalk him. Other fate-cursed characters include Henning's ex-wife, Nora Klemetsen, who's in a relationship with Iver Gundersen, a close colleague of Henning's at

123news; Henning's estranged sister, Trine Juul-Osmundsen, who's forced out as Minister of Justice after being accused of sexually harassing a younger, male politician; and assistant police chief Pia Nøkleby, who's betrayed by her married lover. Enger seamlessly integrates all these individual stories into a larger tale of dirty business and politics. As Henning approaches the end of his painful journey, he longs for the certainty that he has touched someone's life. His excruciating ordeal will touch the heart of every reader. *Agent: Astrid Dalaker, Northern Stories (Norway).* (Aug.)



Fugitive from the Grave

Edward Marston. Allison & Busby, \$25 (320p) ISBN 978-0-7490-2290-7

Set in 1817, Marston's rollicking fourth Bow Street Rivals mystery (after 2017's *Date with the Executioner*) pits bounty hunter twin brothers Peter and Paul Skillen against the Bow Street Runners, London's first official police force. Three straightforward story lines keep the action moving. One follows the mainly failed attempts of the official police to beat the brothers in their quest to apprehend wily and rather likable thief Harry Scattergood. Another involves Peter's efforts on the behalf of Clemency van Emden, a well-to-do woman who has come to London in search of her estranged father. In the third, Paul hunts for the dastardly highwaymen who robbed the coach carrying his attractive companion, Hannah Granville, the "finest actress of her generation." Kidnapping, grave robbing, stalking, theatrical peccadilloes, and miraculous inventions keep the reader entertained, as do visits to inns, pubs, restaurants, and brothels, not to mention some daring gallops along the road between London and Bath. Marston skillfully creates a lively sense of derring-do. (Aug.)



The Bone Curse

Carrie Rubin. Science Thrillers Media, \$13.99 trade paper (296p) ISBN 978-1-940419-98-5

In the arresting opening of this horrifying mystery from Rubin (*The Seneca Scourge*), American medical student Ben Oris visits the Paris Catacombs with his best friend Laurette, a med student from Haiti. After Ben is cut by a bone in the catacombs, bad luck follows him back home to Philadelphia. People in Ben's life, including an ex-girlfriend and his estranged mother, develop a violent and possibly fatal illness. Laurette, whose family is practiced in the traditions of Haitian Vodou, warns Ben that she suspects the bone contained a centuries-old curse. Practical, logical Ben resists the idea that a powerful supernatural force is behind the illnesses. Realistic details of Ben's hospital clerkship as he and other med students diagnose patients help ground the story's paranormal elements. Laurette's belief in unknown forces at work in the world serves as a foil to Ben's pragmatic skepticism, though her character is less developed than his and not much is made of

the Vodou angle. The novel's strength lies in the author's sensitive commentary on adult responsibilities and mental illness. (BookLife)



SF/Fantasy/Horror

Straight Men

Jonathan W. Thurston. Black Rose, \$17.95 trade paper (166p) ISBN 978-1-68433-093-5

The visceral prologue of this gripping horror story reveals the violent tendencies of Mason, a psychopath who kidnaps and tortures young men. When college student and sexual submissive Sean ventures out to the remote Tennessee woods to have fetish sex with Mason, he ignores some very bright red flags. After Mason drugs and assaults him, Sean wakes up wearing nothing but a shock collar. He is forced to obey his captor's list of houseboy rules or face violent punishments. Sean's sense of helplessness and despair is especially palpable when he is raped by several of Mason's friends and, in an arguably more disturbing scene, sodomized by Mason's dog. His situation gets worse when a possible savior turns out not to be what he seemed. As Sean copes with his dire situation, his internal thoughts become a bit too didactic; more convincing are a previous victim's diary and Sean's exchanges with the ghost of his disparaging father. There is also some real tension during an escape attempt. Anyone who can stomach the graphic sexual violence will find that Thurston (*Wolf Warriors*) has created a spellbinding treatise on terror and pain. (Sept.)



The Clockwork Witch

Michelle D. Sonnier. eSpec, \$14.95 trade paper (256p) ISBN 978-1-942990-78-9

Intriguing magic, gender politics, and historical detail weave together in this coming-of-age fantasy debut set in a Victorian London where witches have been both a part of and outside of non-magical society. Young Arabella is the seventh daughter of a prestigious house of witches. Her mother is the Grande Dame of the Witches Council, but Arabella has not manifested her powers yet, to the shame of her family. When Arabella develops an affinity for machines and the unheard-of power of technomancy, she

fights to prove herself a witch and not an abomination. Sonnier captures the opulence of Victorian London as well as the restrictions of class and gender. Arabella's struggle is believable, and her relationship with her closest sister, Rowena, is touching. Although the central plot turns on the tired trope of a prophecy, this does not detract from Sonnier's energetic prose. Fantasy readers will especially enjoy Sonnier's inventive worldbuilding. (Aug.)

Ball Lightning

Cixin Liu, trans. from the Chinese by Joel Martinson. Tor, \$24.99 (384p) ISBN 978-0-7653-9407-1

In Chinese folklore, ball lightning is known as "ghost lanterns," and ghosts of a quantum kind haunt this thoughtful technothriller about the science of the next war. Chen, traumatized when ball lightning invades his birthday party and kills his parents, resolves to understand the elusive phenomenon, despite discouragement from his similarly hurt advisor. Encountering evidence that others have been struck by ball lightning but survived, he teams up with Lin Yun, a young major in the Chinese army with her own obsession: "new concept" weapons. Together, they track down a lost Russian research base and an eccentric Chinese genius, bringing together the clues that reveal ball lightning's secrets in time for it to be weaponized for a conflict with America. Liu (the Three-Body Problem trilogy) pits the quest for theoretical knowledge against the push for practical, if deadly, applications. Without tilting the debate, he moves his characters through both their fears and their desires, showing how neither purity nor repudiation will bring more than a measure of personal relief. Readers intrigued by cutting-edge and slightly speculative science, and the philosophy of scientific ethics, will want to pick up this fine novel. (Aug.)

Solarpunk: Ecological and Fantastical Stories in a Sustainable World

Edited by Gerson Lodi-Ribeiro, trans. from the Portuguese by Fábio Fernandes. World Weaver, \$14.95 trade paper (282p) ISBN 978-0-9987022-9-2

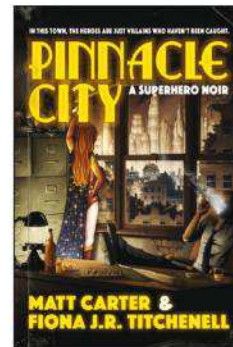
In a dark departure from the usual uplifting themes of the ecopunk genre,

this Brazilian collection's speculative exploration of technological primacy is anything but cheerful. Some of these awkward narratives are rife with translation errors and overburdened by their own ambition, sacrificing pacing and plot for forced exposition and abrupt but predictable twist endings. Telmo Marçal's "When Kingdoms Collide," Gabriel Cantareira's "Escape," and Carlos Orsi's "Soylent Green Is People!" craft glossy utopian veneers that are pulled back to reveal ugliness beneath. Three are alternate histories: André S. Silva's "Xibalba Dreams of the West" imagines a Brazil that was never colonized, Antonio Luiz M. Costa's "Once Upon a Time in the World" is set in a retro-futuristic version of 1929, and Daniel I. Dutra's "Gary Johnson" echoes gruesome and dehumanizing scientific experimentation on African-Americans in the early 20th century. Lodi-Ribeiro's action-packed but emotionally anemic "Cobalt Blue and the Enigma" feels out of step with the rest of the collection, especially when compared to Roberta Spindler's thoughtful and bittersweet standout "Sun in the Heart." Though the goal of bringing Brazilian science fiction to Anglophone audiences is laudable, this anthology is a weak introduction. (Aug.)

★ **Pinnacle City**

Matt Carter and Fiona J. Titchenell. Talos, \$15.99 trade paper (272p) ISBN 978-1-945863-16-5

In this skillfully constructed secondary-world noir novel, having superpowers isn't always so super, and everyone has something to hide. Eddie Enriquez is a former supervillain's henchman turned upstanding PI with the power to see an item's past. Kimberly Kline is Pinnacle City's next big superhero, taking on the mantle of Solar Flare from her uncle. Kimberly and Eddie dig into the underbelly of the city together after a social justice activist lawyer is murdered by the genetically modified people he worked to protect. The conspiracy they uncover threatens to destroy the entire superhero/supervillain system. The dual-perspective narrative keeps the reader in suspense while exploring the two very different worlds that Eddie and Kimberly inhabit



within the same city. Though the focus is on the enormity of the protagonists' task, the authors go out of their way to make readers care about Pinnacle City's ordinary residents as well. By allowing everyone to be a little morally grey, Carter and Titchenell spin a superhero story with staying power. (Aug.)

Hollywood Dead

Richard Kadrey. Harper Voyager, \$26.99 (368p) ISBN 978-0-06-247417-9

James Stark, also known as Sandman Slim, is partially back from the dead and hoping to earn his way all the way back to life in his terrifically over-the-top 10th magical slugfest (after *The Kill Society*). Eva Sandoval, the L.A. leader of Wormwood—a gang of evil Illuminati types who want to rule the world or worse—offers Stark a chance at complete resurrection if he will prevent a Wormwood faction from enacting a ritual that will destroy the City of Angels. He also has to bring her any artifacts that he finds. Stark is the half-human son of the archangel Uriel and "once ruled Hell for a hundred days," but his partial life is slipping away, so he has little choice but to agree. The problem is that archvillains aren't known for keeping their word, and Sandoval is no exception. A lot of pain and blood ensues, mostly Stark's, but luckily, this wisecracking antihero has new friends and old to assist him. The nonstop action and dark humor will thrill urban fantasy fans, including those new to the series. (Aug.)

Denied

Cathy Clamp. Tor, \$17.99 trade paper (352p) ISBN 978-0-7653-7724-1

In this satisfying conclusion to Clamp's Luna Lake sequence (after 2016's *Illicit*), the shape-shifting Sazi of the secluded town of Luna Lake must come together to protect their community against the ruthless depredations of Lagash, the ancient

weresnake hiding in their midst. The man currently known as Tristan Davies has come to thwart the plans of the immortal Lagash. He finds an unexpected ally—and entirely unanticipated mate—in the form of Serbian refugee and young bear shifter Anica Petrovic. Together, the two must deduce Lagash's current identity and stop his string of murders. Even with wildfires bearing down upon the town and unseen enemies waiting to pounce, Tristan and Anica find time to define their newfound relationship, one forged by mutual attraction and a powerful mating bond. Balancing romance and paranormal adventure, Clamp builds upon previous installments while ensuring the book stands well on its own merits. The leads share delightful chemistry and work well together despite the issues brought on by Tristan's longevity and dangerous history and Anica's decade-old traumas. The result is a satisfying romance that further explores a world filled with shape-shifters and mystery. *Agent: Merrilee Heifetz, Writers House. (Aug.)*

Come Back to the Swamp

Laura Morrison. Black Spot, \$9.99 trade paper (108p) ISBN 978-0-9997423-4-1

Morrison (*Grimbargo*) packs a conservationist message into this swift and breezy novella. While doing research in Detroit's Cleary Swamp, graduate student Bernice encounters a wild-looking and unusually strong old woman, Rebecca, who claims to feel physical pain when Bernice wields her steel hedge clippers against invasive species. The next time Bernice ventures into the swamp, Rebecca doses her with a powdery concoction, and she hallucinates a rollicking scene set in the world of her favorite space opera, *Space Mantis*. She awakens in a hospital to the revelation that she's been missing for a year, and she hears a voice calling to her: "Come back to the swamp." Bernice tries to resist the call and get on with her life, but it's nearly impossible, and she's soon forced to make a life-altering choice. Morrison's smooth prose effectively captures the beauty and wildness of the swamp, and Bernice's struggle to accept or deny her destiny rings true. Morrison certainly has something to say about the environment, but the delivery isn't heavy-handed. The *Firefly*-esque scene with Captain Joe and the crew from

Space Mantis is a delight, and the epilogue leaves a door open to further adventures. *(Aug.)*

Awakenings

Clint Geller. SciroFant, \$3.99 e-book (322p) ISBN 978-1-77342-008-0

Geller's cluttered debut, first in the *Gennebar Rising* epic fantasy series, moves awkwardly from labored beginning to action-packed second half, but that action demonstrates the series' promise in spite of derivative elements. In Drenarian-occupied Gennebar—a clear parallel to ancient Roman-occupied Israel—tensions between various opposing factions are reaching breaking points. Sixteen-year-old Arol, a menial assistant at the Sacred Temple of Gennebar, develops unexpected and surprising powers that will change the course of his life. Arol's best friend, Zorn, is at loose ends until he meets a beautiful and mysterious fortune-teller. Meanwhile, militaristic rebel leader Zemakiel and peaceful spiritual shepherd Lemuel present competing visions for Gennebari resistance. Numerous characters are archetypes with murky motivations, and in spite of an intriguing, long-hidden system of magic, the construction of the world's other elements is occasionally clumsy, especially when it relies too heavily on historical analogies. Readers interested in stories of uprisings against occupying regimes will appreciate Geller's work, especially the intricately plotted battle scenes. *(BookLife)*

Romance/Erotica

Lies, Love, and Breakfast at Tiffany's

Julie Wright. Shadow Mountain, \$15.99 trade paper (320p) ISBN 978-1-62972-487-4

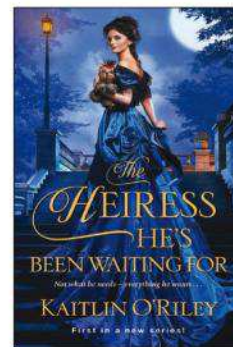
Wright follows *Lies Jane Austen Told Me* with a delightful winner that pits two friends against Hollywood's "wretched hive of scum and villainy." Portal Pictures' newest assistant film editor, Sylvia Bradshaw, is under the gun working on the studio's latest potentially Oscar-worthy movie. Her boss, Dean Thomas, is always absent even when he's present. The night before the film's final cuts are due, Sylvia is trying

to drag a very drunken Dean back to the studio when former boss Ben Armstrong comes to the rescue. It turns out Ben's been carrying a torch for Sylvia since forever, but his Galahad moment of helping her out eventually backfires, costing them both big time. It takes a little forgivable deus ex machina to get Sylvia and Ben to their happy ending. Thanks to dialogue that's peppered with movie references and sweet scenes with Sylvia's lovable grandma, contemporary romance fans will be charmed. *(Nov.)*

★ The Heiress He's Been Waiting For

Kaitlin O'Riley. Zebra, \$7.99 mass market (311p) ISBN 978-1-4201-4463-5

The best scenes in O'Riley's Victorian-era series launch are not the passionate stolen moments, but the intimate conversations and lighthearted humor. Headstrong shipping heiress Sara Fleming is furious when her parents whisk her away from New York to London for an extended visit with their Hamilton cousins, who run a delightful bookstore. While resenting her parents for not accepting her American fiancé, Alexander, Sara still enjoys the glitter of London with her cousins and the intriguing Christopher Townsend, the Earl of Bridgeton. The characters are refreshingly communicative, as Sara tells Christopher about her deepest feelings and Christopher talks about rescuing his sisters from abuse. Christopher needs to marry money to protect his sisters, but the way he approaches his future reveals his integrity and separates him from the fortune hunters. Sara needs to grow up, and though her personal development is rushed, it's believable. Several tender moments take place in the bookstore, illustrating the Hamiltons' close ties and



setting up the shop to feature in the rest of the series. This charming romance with believable, charismatic characters is a strong start, and readers will eagerly antici-

pate the next installment. *Agent: Jane Dystel, Dystel, Goderich & Bourret. (Sept.)*



Going Down Easy

Erin Nicholas. Montlake Romance, \$12.95 trade paper (240p) ISBN 978-1-5039-0066-0

Nicholas (*Cashmere and Camo*) pairs New Orleans native Gabe Trahan with New York restoration architect Addison Sloan in this clever, scorching contemporary. Addison and Gabe have been enjoying some touristy no-strings weekend flings, but Gabe takes them seriously even before he learns Addison has relocated to his hometown. Self-reliant Addison, however, is keeping a secret and has other practical concerns that lead her to regretfully break off their affair. Gabe feels they're better together than apart and counters by surreptitiously inviting her into his social circle, a move that fills a strong need for Addison. Soon she acknowledges what Gabe means to her, willingly mingling her life and family with his, gaining enough confidence to give up a measure of control, and offering Gabe her help in return. This mature, richly characterized story balances intense erotic desire with emotional growth and mutual support. *(Sept.)*



True-Blue Cowboy: Rocky Mountain Riders, Book 4

Sara Richardson. Forever, \$5.99 mass market (312p) ISBN 978-1-5387-1225-2

Richardson takes readers on an emotionally satisfying, sometimes wrenching journey in her fourth Rocky Mountain Riders contemporary western (after *Renegade Cowboy*). Plucky former lawyer Everly Brooks flees San Francisco after her ex-fiancé gets her disbarred for something he did. She winds up in tiny Topaz Falls, Colo., running a farm and small café—and greatly preferring it to her former lifestyle, much to her parents' chagrin. Honorable and handsome bronc rider Mateo Torres has always been determined to financially support his struggling family back in Mexico. He buys the land on which Everly's farm is located, planning to raze it and put up luxury condos so his family will never want for anything. But after his temporary trailer home is flooded, he moves into Everly's farmhouse—and into her

heart. Readers will fall hard for multilayered Mateo and caring, empathetic Everly. This well-plotted and expertly characterized trip to small-town Colorado, which includes glimpses of happily-ever-afters from past books, is a sweet, refreshing summer treat. *Agent: Suzie Townsend, New Leaf Literary & Media. (Aug.)*



Highland Betrayal: The Sons of Gregor MacLeod, Book 3

Alyson McLayne. Sourcebooks Casablanca, \$7.99 mass market (384p) ISBN 978-1-4926-5456-8

McLayne's delightful third 15th-century Sons of Gregor MacLeod novel (after *Highland Conquest*) is a dramatic mix of adventure, danger, and sex. Laird Callum MacLean is betrothed to resourceful and independent Maggie MacDonnell but has not seen her in three years. Callum's father was murdered, and Callum is single-mindedly focused on finding the killer. After traveling to MacDonnell Castle, Callum is disturbed to learn that Maggie's brother and laird, Ross, heartbroken over the death of his wife and child, is drinking himself to death. Maggie's nefarious cousin Irvin is determined to take over the clan and marry Maggie against her will. When Callum departs to resume his quest, Maggie refuses to stay behind and makes a daring escape, joining Callum and his men for the treacherous journey back to MacLean territory. The magnetism between Callum and Maggie is highly alluring as she must decide whether she trusts him enough to make a future with him. The trek through the Highlands adds intensity to this tale of multifaceted characters and sizzling sensuality. *Agent: Kevan Lyon, Marsal Lyon Literary. (Aug.)*



Cooper's Charm

Lori Foster. HQN, \$15.99 trade paper (336p) ISBN 978-1-335-01752-9

The woods of rural Ohio help wounded souls heal in Foster's tender contemporary. Sisters Phoenix and Ridley need a quiet place to heal and regain their confidence after some hard knocks, and picturesque lakeside resort Cooper's Charm is the perfect temporary landing spot. The groundskeeper job is hard work, but the physical labor helps Phoenix recover from

the trauma of robbery and assault, and she thrives on being part of a tight-knit staff. Resort owner Cooper Cochran understands needing a hideout, since he bought the resort while reeling from his wife's murder, and Phoenix helps take his mind off his woes. Ridley, at loose ends after an ego-bruising divorce and hefty settlement, stays at the resort as a housekeeper and soon falls for sexy scuba instructor Baxter McNab. Sexiness permeates every scene; Cooper's gentle protectiveness and desire contrasts with Baxter and Ridley's hot bedroom games. A subplot involving a stalker and vandalism feels misplaced in this otherwise well-executed contemporary romance. Foster excels at portraying well-crafted characters with distinct personalities, and readers will enjoy the banter among all the friends. *(Aug.)*



Bad Reputation: Bad Bachelors, Book 2

Stefanie London. Sourcebooks Casablanca, \$7.99 mass market (384p) ISBN 978-1-4926-5520-6

London capably follows *Bad Bachelor* with this frothy, spicy contemporary in which a gossipy dating app wreaks havoc. Playboy Wes Evans comes from Manhattan dance royalty, but he's determined to make his own success with an offbeat ballet production his family doesn't support—until the notorious *Bad Bachelors* app strikes, spreading rumors about his impressive physical endowment. Soon a key investor steps back from supporting Wes's show. Quirky ballerina Remi Drysdale fled her native Australia after a devastating betrayal. After several flopped auditions, she's convinced herself that she's doomed to teach barre fitness forever. When Wes accompanies his niece to one of Remi's classes, he's immediately drawn to Remi's quick wit and graceful body, and when he sees her dance, he knows he's found his show's lead. Remi's powerfully drawn to Wes, but she's mixed business and pleasure before with disastrous results. London's hero and heroine have impressive depth and her charming supporting cast shines. This fun and heart-filled contemporary will satisfy London's existing fans and garner her new ones. *Agent: Jill Marsal, Marsal Lyon Literary. (Aug.)*



Shimmy Bang Sparkle

Nicola Rendell. Montlake Romance, \$12.95 trade paper (319p) ISBN 978-1-5039-0402-6

Jewel thief Stella Peretti and notorious fence Nick Norton join forces to steal one of the largest diamonds in the world in this lukewarm, cliché-packed contemporary. Nick is ready to get out of the criminal life, but when he sees Stella pull off a flawless theft of a diamond ring, he follows her home and sets out to seduce her. Stella and her two best friends have been a thieving team since childhood, but a couple of injuries leave Ruth and Roxie unable to participate in their biggest and final heist, so she teams up with Nick to finish the job. While Stella is sweet and passionate, she turns into a simpering ingenue when Nick is around. He comes across as controlling and aggressive, patronizingly teaching her the few things she doesn't know and dictating sex acts. Lazy, sometimes offensive characterization (including a playboy sheikh and a fat man who's depicted as constantly eating) and too-convenient plot twists make this novel entirely missable. *Agent: Emily Sylvan Kim, Prospect Agency. (Aug.)*

Driving Whiskey Wild: The Whiskeys, Book 3

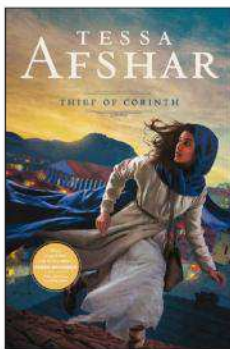
Melissa Foster. World Literary, \$4.99 e-book (312p) ASIN B076X4T6QN

Foster's savory third Whiskeys contemporary (after *Truly, Madly, Whiskey*) will delight fans of alpha male heroes and feminine heroines. Bullet Whiskey, an ex-Special Forces biker, and Finlay Wilson, a chef starting a catering business, seem entirely unlike—she's sweet and he's scary—but they have more in common than they think. Soon they're finding their ways into each other's hearts. Although the focus is on the budding romance between the two, the novel also takes time to raise concerns about the toll that war takes on soldiers as well as their loved ones. Foster writes believable protagonists and shows that these complete opposites make sense together. Her secondary characters are also well-developed, and readers quickly become invested in their lives. Tension and release in all the right places will keep readers eager for the next book in the series. (*BookLife*)

Inspirational**★ Thief of Corinth**

Tessa Afshar. Tyndale, \$24.99 (400p) ISBN 978-1-4964-2865-3

Afshar, Christy award-winner for her 2013 novel *Harvest of Gold*, once again brings historical detail to vibrant life, this time focusing on the city of Corinth—center of first-century CE commerce and culture—and the family of fictional Galenos. Galenos's daughter, Ariadne, has lived with her oppressive mother and grandfather in a villa near Athens ever since her parents' divorce as a child. Now 16, she flees to her father's home in Corinth, where she quickly discovers the family secret: her father is the famous Honorable Thief, who robs only the richest and most unscrupulous citizens. Ariadne faces challenges in her new life,



among them the displeasure of the city's women who think she is ridiculous when she enters a prestigious race at the Isthmian Games, as well as the contentious relationship

with her foster brother, Theo. Despite this, she is bent on helping her father, even if it means becoming a thief herself. But then, abruptly, Galenos and Ariadne's lives are transformed when Ariadne's brother, Dionysus, arrives from Athens with his friend, Paul of Tarsus. Paul's teachings bring healing to the family, and particularly to Ariadne, who must face her selfishness and pride. Afshar again shows her amazing talent for packing action and intrigue into the biblical setting for modern readers. (*Aug.*)

The Fashion Designer

Nancy Moser. Shiloh Run, \$14.99 trade paper (320p) ISBN 978-1-68322-601-7

Moser returns to Annie Culver and her friends in this enjoyable sequel to *The Pattern Artist*. Annie and her husband, Sean, have partnered with their friends Maude and Edna to start a dress shop in 1912 New York. When discussions

between Annie and her financial backers take a drastic turn from her original vision of bringing fashion to working women at an affordable price, Annie cuts ties with the backers and turns to others for advice. Soon, Annie, Maude, and Edna work to acquire funding, order supplies, create designs, and stay true to their commitment. As the travails and successes mount, readers will become invested in the many characters surrounding Annie, who strives for personal independence in defiance of the cultural norms of the time. Annie struggles with fear and doubt, not only for her idea, but also for God's provision in her life. Other characters experience their own challenging dilemmas requiring them to ask hard questions of themselves and God, but those issues never overshadow the optimistic tone of the story. The slogan of the store—"unruffled, unveiled, unstoppable women"—is a perfect descriptor for the tenacious religious feminists who here pursue the American Dream. (*Aug.*)

The Mother Keeper

Paula Scott. West Butte, \$12.99 trade paper (358p) ISBN 978-0-692-88531-4

In a departure from her historical romances, Scott (California Rising series) delves into contemporary dangers with this inspirational novel about the power of secrets. In Colorado Springs, Colo., Jenny and Ken McBride believe that after they are happy, strong Christians. But after their unborn child is killed in a car accident, the deep emotional and physical scars left on Jenny and Ken slowly bring their relationship to the brink of collapse. In Sutterville, Tenn., 17-year-old Ellie Ryan discovers she's pregnant. Although she is happy about the news, she also fears her dreams of singing in Nashville will need to be put on hold. When the Klein family, who are active members of their church's crisis pregnancy center, decides to take her in, she must adjust to the wealth and the strong faith of the new people around her. As Ellie becomes closer to the Kleins, she begins to believe some of them are hiding secrets, but decides to keep quiet. Then Jenny meets Ellie on a trip to Tennessee, and both women begin to again believe that their dreams are worth fighting for; Jenny starts to emerge from her depression, and Ellie continues her

pursuit of a singing career. But after hidden addictions and affairs are finally revealed, characters must struggle with their own values in search of redemption. In this powerful story, Scott elegantly considers the difference between faith and trust. (*BookLife*)

Comics

Meal

Blue Delliquanti and Soleil Ho. Iron Circus, \$15 trade paper (150p) ISBN 978-1-945820-30-4

In this sunny, charming foodie comic, aspiring cook Yarrow moves across America to work at a new restaurant. The twist: it's dedicated to entomophagy, or insect-eating. A fervent believer in the future of bug cuisine, Yarrow already raises her own mealworms and whips up dishes for herself and her friends: "Fresh batch of mealworms with cinnamon and sugar... and that's what I call breakfast!" But she has a lot to learn from stern head chef Chanda. Soon the staff is busy working with bee larvae, silkworm pupae, grasshoppers, tarantulas, and cricket flour, while Yarrow shyly pursues a romance with local mural artist Milani. Throughout, the creators drop in knowledge about gourmet cooking, restaurant work, and the history and global culture of edible insects. A manga influence shows in the outsized depictions of Yarrow's high-energy enthusiasm, but the uncluttered, thickly inked artwork by Delliquanti (*Oh Human Star*) is very much her own. The diverse cast are simply drawn but the food looks delicious—and, for readers inspired by the lively cooking scenes, recipes are provided in the back. This fresh and tasty comic provides an enticing introduction to a less-traveled area of cuisine. (*Oct.*)

Eight Million Ways to Die

John K. Snyder III and Lawrence Block. IDW, \$24.99 (144p) ISBN 978-1-61377-884-5

Snyder's adaptation of Block's novel makes for a skillfully realized graphic narrative. On the mean streets of 1982 New York City, former policeman Matthew Scudder works as a private investigator. His latest case connects him with Kim Dakkinen, a sex worker who wants out of "the life" but fears Chance, her cultured,

art collecting pimp, so she hires Scudder to negotiate on her behalf. Chance agrees to let Kim go, but the following morning's news reveals that she has been murdered. Chance proclaims his innocence and himself enlists Scudder to track down the real killer. What follows is an intense search for a serial killer as Scudder weaves through a labyrinth of informants, cops, petty criminals, and prostitutes while fighting his internal battle with a guilty conscience that he copes with via round the clock drinking. The artwork, with thick outlines and muted color splashes, recalls noir film stills as it grounds the story in gritty, period-accurate realism while evoking the kind of squalid urban purgatory depicted in period pieces such as *Taxi Driver*. This moody feast will appeal to fans of classic crime fiction.

Literary Agent: Danny Baror, Baror International. (July)

Green Almonds: Letters from Palestine

Anaële and Delphine Hermans. Lion Forge, \$19.99 trade paper (152p) ISBN 978-1-941302-89-7

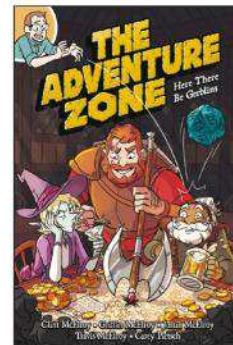
In this humble epistolary graphic memoir, Anaële Hermans leaves her native Belgium to volunteer at a youth center in Palestine. She charts her travels in letters and postcards—which her artist sister Delphine illustrates in black and white with strategic charm—of a land where guns and checkpoints trample a pastoral way of life. Their correspondence, punctuated by Delphine's carefully shaded bowls of fruit and almonds, depicts the intersection of the unimaginable and the mundane. Anaële describes a "Swiss cheese" landscape where Israeli settlers have taken all the hills, squeezing Palestinians into the lowlands. The opening presents a cavalcade of facts, matching Anaële's saturation as a wide-eyed foreigner, but the story picks up when she falls for a local guy named Majdi and her investment in Palestine becomes personal. When Anaële returns to Belgium, she encounters stark lines, in contrast to the gentle shades and dark corners of Palestine. There is no shortage of travel narratives by Westerners whose eyes are opened in war torn countries, but Anaële doesn't pose herself as a savior. She is simply a visitor who shares her life and

labor with people in a difficult situation; together they create small, human spaces beneath the barbed wire of conflict. If the Hermans' thoughtful, poignant travelogue feels unresolved, it's because anything else would be fiction. (*July*)

The Adventure Zone: Here There Be Gerblins

Clint McElroy et al. First Second, \$19.99 (256p) ISBN 978-1-250-15370-8

The McElroy family ups their metafictional wackiness in this comic adaptation of their podcast of same name, which revolves around live performance of role-playing game *The Adventure Zone*. The comic follows Magnus (human), Taako (elf), and Merle (dwarf) as they fight their way deep into



dungeons filled with monsters, mayhem, and whatever else the dungeon master throws at them. In between exploring and fighting, the heroes amuse themselves by antagonizing

one another, pontificating on dwarves' musical preferences, and cussing out the dungeon master, who occasionally pops into the story to give direction, insult the players, or congratulate himself on his own crafty storyline. In the tradition of RPGs, illustrator Carey Pietsch (*Mages of Mystralia*) introduces each new character with a trait sheet, helping the reader to quickly get up to speed on their quirks. Pietsch delivers the essence of role-playing, enhancing many scenes' ambience and transforming the book into a delightful visual experience that balances exposition and action. (*July*)

The Beautiful Death

Mathieu Babelt, trans. from the French by Edward Gauvin. Titan Comics, \$24.99 (144p), ISBN 978-1-78586-134-5

Babelt's sumptuously illustrated tale opens on a melancholic scene, as three young men navigate a city ravaged by alien insects. Initially more *Waiting for Godot* than *Starship Troopers*, the three main characters bicker about where to stay, for how long, and about life before

the end of the world. They're bored, fed up with each other, and unraveling at the stress of finding ways to stay alive. But the pace accelerates with the introduction of Robin, a woman with a strange connection to the invading insects. From meditating on the postapocalyptic human experience, Babet veers into an action-adventure romp of celestial conspiracies, gunfights, and world saving escapades. Bizarre, intricately drawn elements are introduced, such as when two characters make love surrounded by giant insects, or when a corpse is infested and reanimated by sentient bugs. These eerie set pieces are fantastic individually, showcasing Babet's artistic range, but the story loses all logic. Characters who were once concerned about concrete human issues—like having enough food—are suddenly bounding like superheroes out of building windows, all guns blazing. Still, Babet's forceful, haunting visuals fascinate. This debut heralds the arrival of a comics talent with great potential. (June)

About Betty's Boob

Vero Cazot and Julie Rocheleau. Archaia, \$29.99 (192p) ISBN 978-1-68415-164-6

In this joyous paean to resilience, a breast cancer diagnosis devastates then subsequently enlivens one woman's life. After a mastectomy, Betty loses her job, her love, and her self-esteem. But when she chases her windblown wig onto a cruise ship, she discovers the world of burlesque—and in it, a bright and beautiful way forward. Betty becomes Betty Boob, a defiantly one-breasted chanteuse whose setbacks become her greatest strength. Rocheleau's illustrations turn each page into a raucous, exultant ode to the art of cartooning: Betty's electric grins and the spangled backstage come alive with textural detail and deep, jewel-toned colors, and the motion of everything from Betty's performances to her encounter with a handsome entertainer nearly leaps off the page. Though certain elements border on the saccharine (the burlesque troupe is at times a bit too quirky) the tale's adherence to the reality of sickness and loss keeps it grounded. Betty's story is a charmed one, but not quite a fairy tale. Rather, it is a celebration of change, fortitude, and the healing power of art. (June)

[Q&A]

PW TALKS WITH LISA HANAWALT

All the Weird Little Horses

Cartoonist and *Bojack Horseman* production designer Hanawalt's offbeat Western, *Coyote Doggirl* (Drawn & Quarterly, Aug.), features an anthropomorphic outlaw, Coyote, and her beloved horse, Red.

What inspired you to draw a western comic?

It started as a stream-of-consciousness comic around my love of horses. I started taking horseback riding lessons when I was eight, and when I got on a horse for the first time, I went full horse. It's a weird relationship, because you're asking this animal to let you ride around on its back. Does the horse like it? Is it mutually beneficial? At the same time, I'd been watching *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* and *The Searchers* and *True Grit*. I've always enjoyed westerns, but it's a problematic genre. I wanted to explore that world in my own surreal way.

Why did you draw the characters as anthropomorphic animals?

It's a simpler way to portray complicated emotions. If you draw human characters, people make assumptions based on what they look like. Whereas if they see a wolf or a moose, it just looks like every other wolf or moose. It's easier to project our emotions onto animals. Telling stories with animals is a shortcut, in a way.

Most of your comics work up to now has been in shorter stories and gag comics. Were there challenges in creating a longer graphic novel narrative?

I worked on it between larger projects, so I'd go away from it for six months,

then come back and add to the overall arc. But, in a way, it was stringing many shorter stories together, which just happen to have the same character. I have other stories about Coyote, but at a certain point I decided I should finish it. If I had the time, I could have made this book 600 pages long.

What attracted you to the Coyote character?

She's the hero of the book, but she's also flawed. She's silly, bratty, self-centered. She's isolated in the beginning; she doesn't know how to have intimate relationships. Then she's abducted (or rescued) and has trouble fitting in with this group of wolves. I like that she's half hero and half idiot. And she's bright pink.



© KIM NEW MONEY

You also work in animation on Netflix's *Bojack Horseman*. How does working with publishers compare to the TV industry?

It's a matter of scale. Drawing comics, I was used to working by myself. In TV, that's just not possible. When I started working on *Bojack*, I had to learn how to collaborate. I thought I would hate it, because I'm very particular. But I've grown to love it. You have all these other people to bounce ideas off, and it makes it easier, as long as you all respect each other. But in comics, I get to be the god of my own little world.

—SHAENON GARRITY

Nonfiction

Sicilian Splendors: Discovering the Secret Places That Speak to the Heart

John Keahey. St. Martin's/Dunne, \$26.99 (304p) ISBN 978-1-250-10469-4

Keahey (*Seeking Sicily*) is a congenial host in this sunny and inquisitive memoir of his three-month excursion to the least-visited parts of Sicily. He shows up in a town of a few hundred or a thousand people with a loose plan that is almost always guided by the locals (“I come into a village unannounced, ask questions, usually at a bar, where someone almost always knows the answers or knows somebody who knows”), who eventually show him around. Keahey interweaves Sicily’s history of invasions (Greek, Roman, Norman, and Arab) and their cultural and culinary legacies into his story, between getting side-tracked by a conversation with a new Sicilian friend or a delicious local pasta dish (while visiting Calascibetta, Keahey ate “some twisted noodles I had never seen before with ricotta and a tomato sauce”). The book has an air of melancholy to it, as well: Keahey notes how emigration to northern Italy or abroad has left an interior filled with empty buildings, some of which are now being rehabbed into B&Bs by those trying to make a living off the growing tourism industry. This is a wondrously joyous account of travel as it should be. (*Nov.*)

The Art of Logic in an Illogical World

Eugenia Cheng. Basic, \$27 (320p) ISBN 978-1-5416-7248-2

Mathematician Cheng (*Beyond Infinity*) considers how the principles of math can be used to help define one’s personal ethos and bridge the gap between differing points of view. She explores real-life ethical and philosophical problems, like white privilege, “arbitrary standards” in education, and racially-motivated police brutality, through the lens of data-driven logical precepts and mathematical techniques. These include proofs, Venn diagrams, truth tables, flow charts, fractal trees, and more. Using these methods, Cheng argues, can help people avoid mistakes in logical thinking and recognize fallacies.



From an 1879 edition of Chopin’s 24 Preludes, as seen in *Chopin’s Piano* by Paul Kildea (reviewed on p. 57).

However, she posits that there is more to having a constructive conversation than logic alone, stating that “we should look to engaging people’s emotions to convince them of logical arguments.” Discussing thorny issues, she says, requires a sense of “nuance,” rather than the “false promise of black and white clarity,” and a more intuitive and feelings-based approach. Cheng is largely successful in making mathematical principles and formulas accessible to a lay audience, though the occasional statement—such as “it is the contrapositive of the converse so is equivalent to the converse”—will be challenging for those unfamiliar with math jargon. Cheng’s suggestion to

combine the persuasive powers of logic with emotional appeal to find common ground is original and pragmatic, particularly in these divisive times. *Agent: George Lucas, InkWell Management. (Sept.)*

The Good Neighbor: The Life and Work of Fred Rogers

Maxwell King. Abrams, \$28 (400p) ISBN 978-1-4197-2772-6

The creator and host of the 1968–2001 children’s television show *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood* was a paragon of friendliness, according to this adulatory biography. King, a former *Philadelphia Inquirer* editor who knew Fred Rogers before his death, paints him as a genius with an uncanny

rapport with children—sprouted from boyhood struggles with wealthy, smothering parents, bullies, and asthma—and a determination to alleviate their angst. Rogers became famous for his show, which blended puppets, songs, conversational lessons on everything from cleaning up messes to weathering divorce, and reassurances that kids are fine the way they are, all based on the latest child-development theories. In King's glowing portrait, Rogers, who was also a Presbyterian minister, was a protector of family values—he refused to advertise merchandise to kids—as well as an exemplar of “caring, kindness and modesty,” who was dubbed “the most Christ-like human being I have ever encountered” by a fellow clergyman. Rogers has been criticized for promoting a culture of television passivity and coddling—he once retaped a scene in which a pot of popcorn overflowed because he thought the spillage might frighten young viewers—but King's hagiography skirts those issues. Readers looking for an incisive examination of Rogers's impact will not find one here. (Sept.)

★ Heartland:

A Daughter of the Working Class Reconciles an American Divide

Sarah Smarsh. Scribner, \$26 (304p) ISBN 978-1-5011-3309-1

“Class is an illusion with real consequences,” Smarsh writes in this candid and courageous memoir of growing up in a family of working-class farmers in Kansas during the 1980s and '90s. A writing professor and journalist whose work has appeared in the *Guardian* and the *New Yorker*, Smarsh tells her story to her inner child, whose “unborn spirit” allows Smarsh to break the cycle of poverty that constrained her family for generations. Smarsh was born to a teenage mother, and the women in her family were all young mothers who hardened and aged early from the work it took to survive the day-to-day. Smarsh writes with love and care about these women and the men who married them, including her father and Grandpa Arnie, but she also lays bare their hardships (for many poor women, “there is a violence to merely existing: the pregnancies without health care, the babies that can't be had, the repetitive physical jobs”) and the shame of being

poor (“to experience economic poverty... is to live with constant reminders of what you don't have”). It is through education that Smarsh is able to avoid their fate; but while hers is a happy ending, she is still haunted by the fact that being poor is associated with being bad. Smarsh's raw and intimate narrative exposes a country of economic inequality that “has failed its children.” *Agent: Julie Barer, the Book Group.* (Sept.)

How Do We Look:

The Body, the Divine, and the Question of Civilization

Mary Beard. Liveright, \$24.95 (240p) ISBN 978-1-63149-440-6

Beard (*Women & Power: A Manifesto*) examines how people historically have interpreted art in this disjointed two-part narrative. Part one looks at depictions of the body in ancient art from around the world, including an enormous 3,000-year-old stone head that sits in a jungle in Mexico and ancient Chinese emperor Qin's tomb in China. In Greece, the sculpted, well-toned male body in statuary and painted pottery images of women performing domestic tasks convey a message about ideal living, which Beard likens to advertisements of the 1950s. Part two focuses on depictions of the divine in art as they appear in the Hindu temple at Angkor Wat in Cambodia; cave art at Ajanta, India; a mosaic of Jesus at the Church of San Vitale in Ravenna, Italy; the Sancaklar Mosque in Istanbul; and elaborately illustrated Jewish Bibles that have sparked “human controversy and conflict, peril and risk.” Beard's clear and often witty prose is on full display and, as usual, her book is filled with historical detail, but the two sections fail to come together. There are enough intriguing morsels to satisfy longtime fans of Beard, but the book as a whole feels underdeveloped. Illus. and photos. (Sept.)

How to Be a Good Creature:

A Memoir in Thirteen Animals

Sy Montgomery, illus. by Rebecca Green. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, \$20 trade paper (208p) ISBN 978-0-544-93832-8

Naturalist Montgomery (*The Soul of an Octopus*) rekindles her dormant childhood desire to talk with animals in a narrative that shimmers with grace and wonder.

Ten tales poignantly personify 13 critters both commonplace and exotic, from Tess the border collie and Chris the extroverted pig to spiders and octopuses. “Many young girls worship their older sisters.... [Mine] was a dog, and I... wanted to be just like her: Fierce. Feral. Unstoppable,” Montgomery writes of Molly, her family's Scottish terrier. Other animals she writes about live farther from home, and Montgomery tells of quitting a newspaper job to shadow emus in the Australian Outback and befriending a tarantula in the jungles of South America. In the cloud forest of Papua, New Guinea, she rediscovered “the wildness that keeps us sane and whole, the wild, delicious hunger for life.” Back on her New Hampshire farm, an ermine plundering the henhouse on Christmas offers a unexpected perspective on her difficult mother and a vivid dream of a deceased pet opens her heart to a new dog in need of rescue. Montgomery's lyrical storytelling and resonant lessons on how animals can enhance our humanity result in a tender, intelligent literary memoir. Illus. (Sept.)

The Real Lolita: The Kidnapping of Sally Horner and the Novel That Scandalized the World

Sarah Weinman. Ecco, \$27.99 (320p) ISBN 978-0-06-266192-0

Journalist and editor Weinman (*Women Crime Writers*) combines literary theory and true crime in this speculative account of the 1948 kidnapping of Sally Horner, an 11-year-old New Jersey girl who Weinman posits was the real-life inspiration for *Lolita*, Vladimir Nabokov's 1955 novel. Sally Horner, like Nabokov's Dolores Haze, was abducted and taken across state lines by a pedophile who passed himself off as her father in public and abused her in private. Weinman chronicles the details of what is known about Sally's life during the nearly two years she spent captive with her abductor, Frank La Salle, before recounting her harrowing rescue and La Salle's trial and conviction for kidnapping. Alongside Sally's narrative, Weinman looks at Nabokov's process writing *Lolita*, which he agonized over for years and twice nearly destroyed. The book includes a few odd digressions and a fair amount of conjecture (“Perhaps Sally wondered why they were going so far out

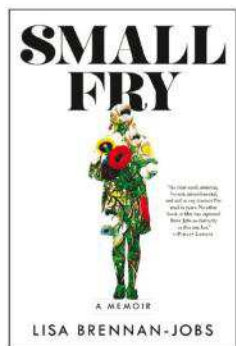
of their way.... Maybe she asked why they had to leave Atlantic City so quickly. Most likely, she kept any complaints or questions to herself"). More poignantly, Weinman argues that Nabokov and his wife, Véra—who served as her husband's spokesperson and flatly denied the use of Sally's story as inspiration for his novel—allowed Sally to be eclipsed by her fictional counterpart: Sally's life had been "strip-mined to produce the bones of *Lolita*." Drawing from interviews with relatives of those involved, Nabokov's personal documents, and court reporting from La Salle's trial, Weinman tells Sally's tragic story as it has never been told before, with sensitivity and depth. (Sept.)



★ **Small Fry: A Memoir**

Lisa Brennan-Jobs. Grove, \$26 (400p)
ISBN 978-0-8021-2823-2

In her incisive debut memoir, writer Brennan-Jobs explores her upbringing as the daughter of Apple founder Steve Jobs and Chrisann Brennan, an artist and writer (the couple never married). The book opens with Jobs's deteriorating health from cancer, but the author quickly backtracks to her early childhood, filling in details of her birth (including Jobs's initial denial of paternity, a claim debunked through DNA testing). Brennan-Jobs's narrative is tinged with awe, yearning, and disappointment. Initially, Brennan-Jobs lived with her mother, who supplemented welfare with waitressing and cleaning houses. In time, Jobs became interested in his daughter, and in high school Brennan-Jobs lived with him, becoming the go-to babysitter for his son with his wife, Laurene Powell. Later, when Brennan-Jobs declined a family trip to the circus, Jobs, citing family disloyalty, asked her to move out and stopped payment on her Harvard



tuition (a kindly friend offered aid, which Jobs later repaid). Bringing the reader into the heart of the child who admired Jobs's genius, craved his love, and feared his

unpredictability, Brennan-Jobs writes lucidly of happy times, as well as of her loneliness in Jobs's spacious home where he refuses to bid her good-night. On his deathbed, his apology for the past soothes, she writes, "like cool water on a burn." This sincere and disquieting portrait reveals a complex father-daughter relationship. *Agent: David McCormick, McCormick Literary.* (Sept.)



★ **Stray: A Memoir of a Runaway**

Tanya Marquardt. Little A, \$24.95 (251p)
ISBN 978-1-50394-916-4

Marquardt's memoir is a brutally honest reflection on her fraught adolescence and journey of self-realization. Marquardt relays the dysfunctional circumstances of her family in British Columbia, focusing on the complicated relationship between her parents: "The tension between Mom and Dad was palpable even though they lived in different towns... and I acting as go-between for two people who hated each other." Marquardt left home at 16 to live with various friends, and made every attempt to avoid returning to her mother's home, even though she tried to understand her: "I played like I hated her, but... I would go through her vanity and jewelry box... because I wanted evidence of her, of who she was." In Vancouver she found outcasts and peers of similar backgrounds: "When I was with Lana, Garret, and Adam, it was like I was living in a microcosm, a world hidden within a world hidden within a world.... We were a bunch of kids playing at being Lost Boys, looking for our version of Neverland." Hers is an entirely relatable teenage journey: at once sensitive and selfish, desperate and brash. This is an edgy memoir about a young woman trying to understand herself. (Sept.)



★ **Vaquita: Science, Politics, and Crime in the Sea of Cortez**

Brooke Bessesen. Island, \$30 (256p)
ISBN 978-1-61091-931-9

Longtime field biologist and research fellow Bessesen presents a passionate if meandering case for saving the world's most critically endangered marine mammal, the vaquita, a five-foot-long porpoise that lives in only one place on earth: the Sea of Cortez, between Baja California and the rest of Mexico. During

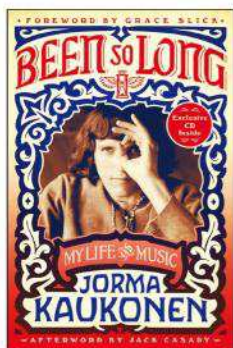
the 20 months Bessesen researched them, the number of remaining vaquitas dwindled from 60 to possibly 15. The culprit is the gill net, used by fishermen for decades to catch a fish called totoaba, whose swim bladders are highly valued in China for their supposed curative powers. But gill nets catch and kill vaquitas, too. Bessesen chronicles efforts to confiscate gill nets and to count vaquitas, as well as visits with villagers, fishermen, Mexican government officials, and scientists to get their takes on the little porpoises. The situation has set struggling fishermen and environmentalists against each other: the government has announced gill net bans, provided subsidies for fishermen using alternative gear, and created a vaquita refuge, but these measures have been abused or gone unenforced. Poachers, cartels, and corruption abound. A last-ditch effort by scientists to raise vaquitas isn't promising; they're ill-suited to captivity. Even the involvement of UNESCO and environmental activist Leonardo DiCaprio and a growing media blitz about the vaquitas' plight haven't seen the animals' population rebound. Although Bessesen sometimes refers to events and vaquita numbers confusingly out of sequence, this is a heartfelt and alarming tale. (Sept.)



★ **Been So Long: My Life and Music**

Jorma Kaukonen. St. Martin's, \$29.99 (368p)
ISBN 978-1-250-12548-4

Jefferson Airplane guitarist Kaukonen's candid and affectionate memoir resembles the rambling and free-flowing road trips he enjoys. The author began taking trips early in life as he traveled to Pakistan and the Philippines from his Washington, D.C., home with his father, who worked for the State Department. When Kaukonen was 16, he was inspired by a guitar-playing friend to play music and, with his father's help, bought his first guitar. In high school, he met Jack Casady, who would become the bassist for Jefferson Airplane and Hot Tuna, and the two began a lifelong friendship and musical partnership. Kaukonen continued to develop his fingerpicking blues guitar style at Antioch College in Ohio, playing with fellow guitarist Ian Buchanan. After college, he headed to California where he joined the Airplane and played at the



1966 Monterey Jazz Festival. At the same time his music career was evolving, he sank into alcoholism, and his marriage with his first wife, Margareta, disintegrated, exacerbated by his own ambivalence. Kaukonen

left Jefferson Airplane in 1972, pursuing the Hot Tuna project he and Casady had begun, but five years later, he decided to go out on his own. He now lives on a ranch with his wife, Vanessa, in southern Ohio, where he runs songwriting and guitar workshops. A mesmerizing storyteller, Kaukonen delivers a memoir as intricate and dazzling as his music. (Aug.)

The Byline Bible:

Get Published in 5 Weeks

Susan Shapiro. *Writer's Digest*, \$17.99 trade paper (272p) ISBN 978-1-44035-368-0

In clear, energetic, and forthright language, writer and teacher Shapiro (*Only as Good as Your Word*) provides a nuts-and-bolts guide to getting a piece of nonfiction writing published, whether in print or online. She focuses on producing short, confessional essays, which she proclaims are the “best way to break into publishing,” though she also includes advice on op-ed and humor pieces, among others. There are no shortcuts, however, despite the gimmicky subtitle. Shapiro constantly reminds her readers to do their homework and thoroughly read up on the genre they’re trying to break into, and the publications they’re planning on approaching. She emphasizes timeliness and originality in choosing subject matter, the importance of feedback and revising when writing, and openness to learning from rejection while approaching editors and publishers. Succinct lists throughout of dos and don’ts (“Don’t arrogantly tell the editor that his readers will surely love your brilliant piece”) will help the potential scribe keep all of Shapiro’s points in order and to hand. Her book is not a full substitute for taking a writing class and learning with a pro, but her insights are excellent starting points for beginners and good

reminders for veterans. (Aug.)

★ Chopin's Piano: In Search of the Instrument That Transformed Music

Paul Kildea. Norton, \$26.95 (288p) ISBN 978-0-393-65222-2

A humble piano that birthed some of composer Frédéric Chopin’s greatest pieces is the peg for a meditation on romanticism in this beguiling study. Composer and pianist Kildea (*Benjamin Britten*) recounts Chopin’s 1838–1839 sojourn on the Spanish island of Majorca where, confined in a gloomy monastery with his mistress, the novelist George Sand, and her children, he composed several of his most well-known preludes on a mediocre piano made by a local artisan, Juan Bauza. After that atmospheric introduction, the Bauza instrument recedes as Kildea’s biographical sketch of Chopin visits other pianos, including his beloved Pleyels and the innovative Steinways that now define his sound. The book’s second half centers on harpsichordist Wanda Landowska, who bought Bauza’s piano for her collection and lost it when Nazis pillaged her Paris home; Kildea’s account of her championship of historically accurate instruments and performance alongside late-romantic melodramatics anchors his insightful exploration of shifting styles of piano-playing and interpretations of Chopin. Kildea’s loose-limbed narrative includes wonderful evocations of the music (Prelude 18 “is like someone arguing with himself—interrupting, stuttering, slowly gaining in confidence and fluency, prone to wild coloratura declamations”) and luxurious digressions on everything from piano-tuning tastes to the 19th-century rebuilding of Paris. This is a wonderful, melodic take on Chopin’s genius. (Aug.)

The Cut Out Girl: A Story of War and Family, Lost and Found

Bart van Es. Penguin Press, \$28 (294p) ISBN 978-0-7352-2224-3

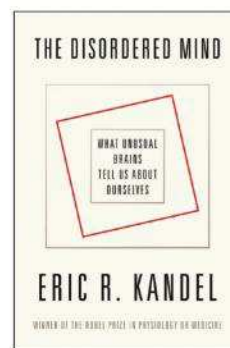
Literature professor van Es (*Shakespeare in Company*) thoughtfully examines a dark chapter in the Netherlands’ past in this look at the life of Lien de Jong, a Dutch Jew who was hidden from the Nazis by van Es’s grandparents before a rift developed between Lien and them. Van Es’s account is based both on interviews with

Lien, whom he met when she was in her 80s, and his reconstruction of events. A year after Holland was invaded by Germany in 1940, Jews were barred from using public places such as parks, libraries, and museums. In 1942, when Jews were required to wear a yellow star to identify themselves, and with the then-eight-year-old Lien the target of other children’s increasing anti-Semitism, her mother took the desperate step of putting her into an underground network of foster families, who placed her with van Es’s grandparents, Jan and Henk. Van Es makes Lien’s childhood palpable by including photographs, excerpts from a poetry scrapbook she’d kept, and the poignant letter her mother wrote to her protectors (“Most Honored Sir and Madam, Although you are unknown to me, I imagine you for myself as a man and a woman who will, as a father and mother, care for my only child”). He also uncovers long-buried secrets relating to the rift between Lien and his grandparents, which was still unhealed when Jan and Henk died. This is a nuanced, moving, and unusual “hidden child” account. (Aug.)

★ The Disordered Mind: What Unusual Brains Tell Us About Ourselves

Eric R. Kandel. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$30 (336p) ISBN 978-0-374-28786-3

Nobel Prize-winning neuroscientist Kandel (*Reduction in Art and Brain Science*) delves optimistically into the current state of the “new biology of mind,” a sophisticated framework deriving from “the marriage of modern cognitive psychology and neuroscience.” Kandel consolidates data and ideas from core advances, including genetic research that proves some biological basis for various psychiatric disorders, and imaging techniques that indicate the function



of specific brain structures. Emphasizing that brain disorders can yield insights into normal cognitive functioning, he looks to autism for understanding the social brain,

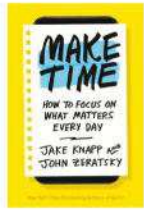
EFFICIENCY EXPERTS

Two books advise office workers on how to focus in a world filled with distractions.

Make Time:**How to Focus on What Matters Every Day**

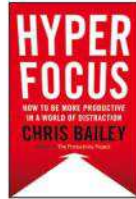
Jake Knapp and John Zeratsky. Currency, \$27 (304p) ISBN 978-0-525-57242-8

Knapp and Zeratsky, coauthors of *Sprint* and former product designers for Google, deliver a cheerful, sweet guide to restructuring one's life to free up time. It's not a productivity guide, they clarify, but a look at how to "actually create more time in your day" for whatever is most important to the reader. The authors warn against the twin lures of the "busy bandwagon," the primacy placed on busyness by modern American workplace culture, and "infinity pools," the apps and other technological tools that turn leisure time into a state of constant distraction. Knapp recalls realizing he was "too busy treading water in a sea of other people's emails, other people's status updates, and snapshots of other people's lunch" to ever start on his longtime goal of writing a book. Their system for breaking free of distractions incorporates four steps: highlight (choosing a single task or achievement for each day to look back on), laser (becoming focused on that highlight), energize (taking care of oneself physically), and reflect. Chock-full of charming b&w illustrations and encouraging catchphrases—"be the boss of your phone!" the authors exhort readers at one point—this is a charming, highly usable guide to trimming out unnecessary distractions from one's life and focusing on what's important. (Sept.)

**Hyperfocus:****How to Be More Productive in a World of Distraction**

Chris Bailey. Viking, \$28 (256p) ISBN 978-1-52552-223-2

In this practical and widely applicable manual, Bailey (*The Productivity Report*), a corporate consultant, identifies distraction as an endemic problem plaguing the business world, and just about every facet of modern life as well. Asserting that every individual's attention wanders on average a staggering 47% of the time, regardless of their task, he introduces as a countermeasure the concept of hyperfocus, a term borrowed from ADHD research, in which one task or project commands complete attention. When applied consciously, Bailey promises, hyperfocus can dramatically improve productivity and performance. Bailey lays out a four-stage process for entering this mode, which involves choosing an object of attention, eliminating distractions, focusing on the chosen object, and "continually draw[ing] your focus back to that one object of attention." Perhaps the book's most valuable chapter centers on step four, with Bailey dispensing tips on taming a variety of distractions, from personal ones like smartphones to companywide ones like meetings. He also discusses the importance of occasionally "recharging your attention" and entering the state opposite to hyperfocus, "scatterfocus," in which the mind can free associate and "connect dots." Highly germane to any fast-paced workplace, this book is a must-read for readers seeking to regain control of their ability to concentrate. Agent: Lucinda Blumenfeld, Lucinda Literary. (Aug.)



depression and bipolar disorders for understanding the emotional brain, schizophrenia for understanding decision making, dementia for understanding memory, and Parkinson's and Huntington's disease for understanding movement. His background as coauthor of the flagship textbook *Principles of Neural Science* is clear throughout, thanks to the highly accessible presentation, heavy on reader-friendly graphics and explanations of basics. Kandel's deep compassion for people is also evident, as when he discusses how understanding the biological basis for mental disorders might take them out of the realm of legal culpability. The result of his work is an easily comprehended, meticulous synthesis of current research into the biological grounding of the human mind. 77 color and b&w illus. (Aug.)

★ **Dopesick: Dealers, Doctors and the Drug Company That Addicted America**

Beth Macy. Little, Brown, \$28 (384p) ISBN 978-0-316-55124-3

Journalist Macy (*Truevine*) takes a hard and heartbreaking look at the cradle of the opioid addiction crisis, the Appalachian region of Virginia and nearby states. She places the responsibility for the epidemic squarely on Purdue Frederick, makers of OxyContin, and its sales division, Purdue Pharma, which engaged in near-predatory marketing practices to sell a drug that has wreaked havoc on the lives of 2.6 million Americans who are currently addicted, with more than 100 dying per day from opioid overdoses. In the first of three sections, she addresses "big pharma" in telling detail, outlining how the overprescribing of pain medication in doctors' offices and emer-

gency rooms created a market demand that was then met by illegal drug peddlers on the streets. Section two follows the spiral of addiction as users of prescription pills no longer able to afford their habit turn to heroin, a cheaper and more lethal solution to feed their fix. In the last section, the author changes the focus to what has become an addiction treatment industry. Macy potently mixes statistics and hard data with tragic stories of individual sufferers, as well as those who love and attempt to treat them. One addict, Tess Henry, was just 26 when she was first interviewed by Macy and, despite multiple attempts at rehab so that she could raise her infant son, she was dead within three years. Macy's forceful and comprehensive overview makes clear the scale and complexity of America's opioid crisis. (Aug.)

Girl Boner: The Good Girl's Guide to Sexual Empowerment

August McLaughlin. Amberjack, \$24.99 (320p) ISBN 978-1-944995-71-3

McLaughlin carefully homes in on the myriad ways that mental and physical health connect with sexuality in this uplifting and refreshingly inclusive guide to women's sexual health based on a podcast of the same name. Combining sex advice with health information, McLaughlin addresses sex work, body image, sexually transmitted diseases, along with topics like masturbation and sex positions, while using language ("person with a vulva" and "person with a penis") to ensure inclusion of trans and gender-nonbinary people throughout. In a chapter detailing her own personal recovery from anorexia, the author interrogates how lack of sexual empowerment can contribute to body image issues and a damaged sense of self. This message is reinforced later in a profile of the Olympic runner and former escort Suzy Favor Hamilton, who notes that cultivating sex positivity was a crucial part of her recovery from postpartum depression. McLaughlin balances these heavier chapters with lighter fare, including a coloring page, word search, prompts for further reflection, and plenty of illustrations. Equally fun, risqué, and informative, this is a welcome addition to sexual health literature. (Aug.)

Lamarck's Revenge: How Epigenetics Is Revolutionizing Our Understanding of Evolution's Past and Present

Peter Ward. Bloomsbury, \$28 (288p) ISBN 978-1-63286-615-8

The main question posed by this frustrating book is whether the acquired characteristics of one generation can be reliably passed on to future generations. In other words, was 18th-century naturalist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck in fact correct that parents can pass on physical changes they've undergone over their lifetime—for instance, improved musculature—to their children, despite this theory having long been considered disproven by Darwin? Ward (*Gorgon*), a paleontologist and astrobiologist, defines epigenetics as "the study of heritable gene functions that are passed on from one reproducing cell to

another, [whether it's] a somatic (body) cell or a germ cell (sperm or ovum), which do not involve a change to the original DNA sequence," while also cautioning that the actual process is "still poorly understood." Ward's analysis ranges widely, taking in the origin of life on Earth, patterns of recovery from mass extinctions, the possible genetic basis for violence, and the genetic impact of various pandemics. Ward references the classic study showing how starvation impacted one and perhaps two generations in the Netherlands following a WWII-era famine, but provides little hard evidence beyond that example. Without a proposed mechanism for such long-lasting effects and without data indicating such effects exist, Ward leaves readers with little more than suppositions. (Aug.)

Mastering Fear: A Navy SEAL's Guide

Brandon Webb and John David Mann. Portfolio, \$27 (224p) ISBN 978-0-525-53356-6

In this inspiring self-help book, entrepreneur and former Navy SEAL Webb (*The Red Circle*) and Mann (coauthor of *The Go-Giver School*) skillfully direct readers on how to harness their fears and accomplish personal goals. Taking a matter-of-fact but empathetic tone, Webb revisits his challenging days in BUD/S (basic underwater demolition/SEAL training) and the resulting process for accomplishing goals he created for himself: decision, rehearsal, letting go, jumping off, and knowing what matters. He devotes a chapter to each step, using his own experiences—good and bad—as examples. For the first step, he draws a counterexample from his first, failed foray into business after leaving the military, which he entered into with partners he intuitively recognized were ill-suited, but chose to work with anyway—thus teaching him about the importance of trusting intuition. Throughout each step, Webb writes, the most important consideration is managing the conversation in one's head: focusing on what will go right, not what could possibly go wrong, a maxim to which he attributes his success in getting SEAL trainees through the demanding sniper training program. Webb's encouraging central message about overcoming and making use of fear should improve the

lives of those who take it to heart. (Aug.)

Ninety-Nine Glimpses of Princess Margaret

Craig Brown. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$28 (432p) ISBN 978-0-374-90604-7

Chatty, catty, and intelligent, Brown's portrayal in vignettes of Britain's Princess Margaret (1930–2002) draws from published memoirs, interviews, and diaries. The "disobedient, attention-seeking" Margaret, writes critic and satirist Brown (*One on One*), grew up suffering in comparison to her older sister, who became Queen Elizabeth II. As "the one who wouldn't ever be first," Margaret was born to fulfill menial duties such as "the patronage of the more obscure charity, the glad-handing of the smaller fry." She captured the world's sympathy with her first, doomed romance to Royal Air Force pilot Peter Townsend (he was divorced and the queen refused to grant Margaret permission to marry him). "The rest of us are allowed to forget a youthful passion, but the world defined Princess Margaret by hers," writes Brown. Margaret was a magnet for people who were "mesmerized less by her image than by the cracks to be found in it." She was invited to events because she could be counted on to misbehave deliciously: "The presence of the Princess would endow a party with grandeur; her departure would be the signal for mimicry to commence." Brown is sympathetic to the plight of a woman who, as a friend said, was "one of the cleverest women... I have ever met, and she never really had an outlet for her intelligence." Brown's entertaining vignettes form a collage portrait of a rebellious anti-Cinderella. (Aug.)

A Politically Incorrect Feminist: Creating a Movement with Bitches, Lunatics, Dykes, Prodigies, Warriors and Wonder Women

Phyllis Chesler. St. Martin's, \$16.99 trade paper (304p) ISBN 978-1-250-18881-6

Psychologist and feminist scholar Chesler (*An American Bride in Kabul*) recounts her experience as a feminist pioneer in this behind-the-scenes look at the second wave feminist movement of the 1960s and '70s. "I remain forever loyal to that moment in time," she writes, "that collective awakening that set me free from my former life

as a girl.” The book documents the individuals, conversations, and groups that were crucial to the protests, sit-ins, and other events, like the founding of the National Organization for Women, the filing of class action lawsuits to counter discrimination against women in the workplace, and the legalization of abortion, that shaped the movement and, in tandem, Chesler’s own personal awakening to feminism. While the book is filled with a fair amount of name-dropping (with numerous shout-outs to Gloria Steinem and Kate Millett, among many others), Chesler is forthright in her portrayal of these friends, mentors, and colleagues, prying open the jealousy, viciousness, and in-group fighting that were just as much a part of the experience as the bravery, resilience, and excitement. She recounts how Naomi Weisstein, one of the cofounders of the Women’s Liberation Union, was “trashed” by fellow members who felt she was too much of a star and wouldn’t surrender her speaking engagements to “less eloquent speakers.” Chesler writes that infighting “was ultimately the psychological reason our mass radical movement ground to a halt.” Chesler’s honest approach, oscillating between personal narrative and social criticism, illustrates the individual trials and triumphs that go into the formation of a nationwide movement. (Aug.)

Travels with Foxfire: Stories of People, Passions, and Practices from Southern Appalachia

Phil Hudgins and Jessica Phillips. Anchor, \$19.95 trade paper (336p) ISBN 978-0-525-43629-4

Beginning in the 1970s, the *Foxfire* book and television series introduced Appalachian culture to an enthusiastic public; this latest installment continues the tradition with a group of comfortable, conversational vignettes from rural Georgia, North and South Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky. Hudgins and Phillips effectively serve *Foxfire*’s goal of preserving the Southern mountainous region’s traditions and folklore, with stories ranging from a lighthearted look at Carl “Feel Bad” Davis’s considerable tractor collection to the heartrending tale of a homeless medicine woman devoted to passing along her healing arts. Phillips conducted interviews, and the experi-

enced Hudgins hews to the storytelling angle, basking in the banter over NASCAR’s link to moonshine running or the history of the bluegrass musical tradition. This low-key travelogue is especially timely, providing (largely nonpolitical) insight into the lives of hardworking people in coal country who desperately hope for better job opportunities. Some readers may be surprised by the breadth of material encompassed here; there are some chapters on African-American artistry and some on award-winning regional cooking (often including recipes). The collection ends abruptly, with no closing chapter, but anyone with an interest in Americana, history, or nature will appreciate these poignant and enjoyable stories of shared knowledge and traditions. (Aug.)

Devil’s Mile: The Rich, Gritty History of the Bowery

Alice Sparberg Alexiou. St. Martin’s, \$27.99 (304p) ISBN 978-1-250-02138-0

This anecdote-laden urban history of New York City’s Bowery by Alexiou (*The Flatiron*) makes for addictive reading. Throughout the 20th century, the street (“synonymous with despair”) in lower Manhattan was once a key thruway in old New Amsterdam, built on an old Lenape Indian footpath north of the colonists’ original settlement, along which rich settlers built their estates. In Alexiou’s hands, the history of the Bowery—from farms to grotty nightlife to bums and back to high-end real estate for the wealthy—is a slice of New York City history. The chapters on the city’s tumultuous early days are top-rate urban history, yet Alexiou hits her stride in describing the 19th century, when the Bowery—with its immigrant riots, gin joints, warehouses, and attitude that “everything was for sale”—was “America’s center of sin.” Astutely written and smartly researched (this isn’t the same shopworn collection of old anecdotes from Herbert Asbury’s 1928 *Gangs of New York*), the book dives deeply into such Bowery notables as Tammany Hall boss Tim Sullivan and continues through the early 20th century (which she covers too briefly) before coming to life again with the punk music scene at CBGB. This is a fascinating micro-take on New York’s cycle of boom and bust. *Agent: Wendy*

Schmalz, Wendy Schmalz Agency. (July)

Humdinger

Michael A. Malpass. Chicken Man Media, \$49.95 (160p) ISBN 978-0-692-95584-0

Malpass, the oldest child and namesake of sculptor Michael Malpass (1946–1991), immortalizes his father’s legacy in this beautifully illustrated, reverential tribute. The author traces his father’s artistic drive to his childhood in Yonkers, N.Y., in the late 1940s, through his education at Pratt Institute in New York City, to his time in the Vietnam War. The younger Malpass describes how his father infused his art with existential wonders at every stage in his career. The older Malpass was inspired by the sphere, which he called “the most perfect form,” and his best known sculptures are patchwork metal globes (up to five feet in diameter), which he welded together from metal scraps, creating what he dubbed “humdingers,” “an outstanding thing of its kind.” Whether finding spiritual connection in the spheres, whimsical joy in his “chicken men” sculptures, or authenticity and psychological depth in his collages and autobiographical drawings, the sculptor expressed his passions for life and family through the process of creating—which he did until his death at 44 from a heart attack when the author was a teenager. This beautifully crafted book offers an indelible portrait of a sensitive artist, his spirited psyche, and his diverse body of work; it is also a son’s loving homage. (*BookLife*)

★ Successful College Teaching Begins with Throwing Away Your Lecture Notes

Calvin Luther Martin. K-Selected, \$15.75 trade paper (154p) ISBN 978-0-9841827-3-2

Most professors are experts in their field, but woefully inept at the most essential part of their job—teaching—argues Martin (*The Way of the Human*), a retired history professor at Rutgers University, in this astute and idiosyncratic guide to college teaching. Early in his book he describes his technique for creating a seating chart and memorizing the names and faces of every student in a class—“I review my name chart... at traffic lights; while I’m shaving.” His goal in mastering a lecture-hall full of names is

“to teach individuals, personalities, real people.” Content and brilliant scholarship—not to mention the instructor’s ego—are secondary concerns to the great teacher, he argues soundly. Over the course of this short book, Martin meanders from topic to topic in a way that is refreshingly off-kilter and personal. He goes from discussing term papers, which he views as a waste of time and energy for both students and professor (most students at the college level can’t write, he says, and unless you’re leading a writing seminar, it’s not your duty to teach them) to describing a lecture he conducted for more than an hour in the dark during a power outage, in which not a single student left or said a word. His point is that teachers need to establish a connection with their students to keep them truly engaged in learning. The book serves as evidence that Martin practices what he preaches: It feels like light reading, yet the message is deep and thoughtful. (*BookLife*)

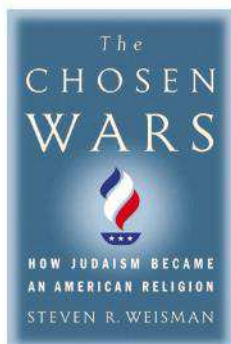
Religion/Spirituality

★ **The Chosen Wars: How Judaism Became an American Religion**

Steven R. Weisman. Simon & Schuster, \$30 (352p) ISBN 978-1-4165-7326-5

Focusing mainly on the 19th century, this expertly told history from Weisman (*The Great Tax Wars*) explores conflicts between tradition and modernity within Judaism that first played out in Charleston, S.C., and still resonate today. When Charleston’s Congregation Beth Elohim was reopened in 1841 after a fire, its members confronted some major proposed changes: the addition of an organ and the elimination of some traditional doctrines (such as the belief in a messianic redeemer).

The innovations did not sit well with everyone, and the dispute eventually ended up in court. Weisman traces how these same controversies played out regionally and nationally, pri-

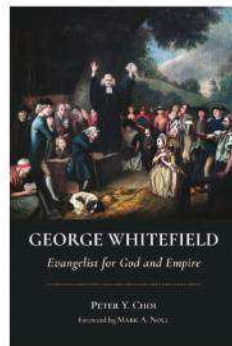


marily through the experiences of Albany rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, whose campaign for reform eventually led to a fistfight during Rosh Hashanah services between his supporters and detractors. Colorful incidents like this add flair to the serious subject matter. For Weisman, the lesson of the history is that “Jews should be unafraid to stand up for how they want to pursue their varied religious paths towards meaning” and that the “courageous examples” of those who did so in the past should give hope to the present generation. Anyone interested in American Judaism will be enlightened by this lucid and entertaining history. (*Aug.*)

★ **George Whitefield: Evangelist for God and Empire**

Peter Y. Choi. Eerdmans, \$24 (240p) ISBN 978-0-8028-7549-5

In this impressive debut, Choi, director of academic studies at Newbigin House of Studies, presents a bold recontextualization of the life of 18th-century English preacher George Whitefield. Using Whitefield’s papers as a source, Choi offers a “character study” of Whitefield as the consummate



18th-century British imperial entrepreneur. Pushing back against previous studies, Choi reframes Whitefield’s long residences in Georgia, stating it was not a “fringe”

colony, but rather a “crossroads of the world” that was important to British imperial growth. Readers looking for a purely spiritual biography will not find that here. Instead, Choi convincingly demonstrates that Whitefield’s “religious and imperial agendas” were inseparable, as when he supported the legalization of slavery in Georgia, hoping enslaved laborers could provide financial support for the education and salvation of black orphans. Choi bolsters his argument by spending time on the decades following the end of Whitefield’s revival and publishing career, when the preacher’s anti-Catholic sentiment was vital to the consolidation of a British Protestant imperial identity. The

book’s accessible prose and clear signposting make this an excellent choice for a general reader, and Choi’s engagement with broader issues of 18th-century colonialism will make it an important volume for scholars of early America. (*Aug.*)

Homespun: Amish and Mennonite Women in Their Own Words

Lorilee Craker. Herald, \$15.99 trade paper (240p) ISBN 978-1-5138-0316-6

Craker (*Money Secrets of the Amish*), who considers herself “just a simple Mennonite girl from the prairies,” gathers essays by Mennonite and Amish women into a revealing and wide-ranging resource. Through her introductions to each section and essays themselves, Craker and the contributing authors describe a culture based on faith in Jesus and Scripture, and a life based on prudence, compassion, and community. The 36 essays are divided into six sections, with a welcome note opening the book because Craker states that “a deep sense of hospitality is fundamental to these women.” Within each section, essays include plain and simple fare such as Rhoda Yoder’s homage to her farmer father, humorous accounts such as Mary Troyer’s musing on stretchy pants, and keenly poetic entries such as Sheila Petre’s rumination on doubt, describing God’s design for the “castle rooms of a columbine” as proof of his expansive power. Some are sermons: “Home is where our souls can rest,” writes Delora Neuschwander, and Samantha Trenkamp preaches on rebuilding from “the shambles of shame.” This eclectic book will interest any reader who’s curious about the plain lifestyle. (*Aug.*)

The Illustrated Herbiary: Guidance and Rituals from 36 Bewitching Botanicals

Maia Toll, illus. by Kate O’Hara. Storey, \$19.95 (176p) ISBN 978-1-61212-968-6

In this delightful debut, wellness coach Toll relies on her imagination to spin a fun botanical mythology. Never aiming to share functional information about herbs (or even to document traditional magical uses), Toll jumps straight into “fanciful descriptions and symbolic flights of fancy” from her personal experiences and lively imagination to offer prompts for introspection into the natural world. Toll gives

each plant a focusing sobriquet or guidance—thyme is “Distill Your Self,” yarrow is “Pocket of Protection”—and then anthropomorphizes the (always female) sprout with a personality and lesson to teach, such as “know the microworld” and “move toward your truth.” Each plant is associated with a solo ritual activity (most do not actually use plant material), reflective questions to guide self-exploration, and a quotation loosely related to a theme or story of folklore. O’Hara’s bright, bold illustrations—which introduce each entry and are also included as a divination deck—will appeal to readers with strong lines and a sense of glowing from their centers, a boldness that carries through to the more representational sketches of plants that follow. However, the use of color and multiple fonts in the text can become overly busy. This will not replace more traditional herbal guides, but it will appeal to those looking for fun new ways of considering plants. (Aug.)

Learning to Speak God from Scratch

Jonathan Merritt. Convergent, \$15.99 trade paper (256p) ISBN 978-1-60142-930-8

Merritt (*Jesus Is Better Than You Imagined*) explores the secularization of key religious terms in this revealing if confusing book. When he moved to New York City from Georgia, Merritt discovered that many of his new neighbors didn’t use language related to Christianity in the same way that he did. *Grace, pain, lost, spirit, family, saint*: these and other words common to the Christian faith seemed, to him, to have lost their traditional meanings. Many charts and infographics detail Merritt’s research into the reluctance to talk about faith, which leads him to the conclusion that Christians are increasingly avoiding faith conversations because of Christian illiteracy, a trend that then causes even greater ignorance of faith. In a bid to recover a common understanding among Christians of sacred words—what he calls “speaking God”—Merritt explores the relationship between words and action, devoting two-thirds of the book to 19 terms and how their meanings have changed. Written in conversational prose as a journey of personal discovery, Merritt’s book reiterates a seemingly simple method for reviving sacred words, but it’s oddly

similar to his original critique: understand that “words are malleable” and to allow fluidity in a word’s changing meaning through cultures and in different contexts. Though his charts are illuminating, the confusion in Merritt’s final advice makes this thought-provoking book more puzzling than it ought to be. (Aug.)

The Mountains Are Calling

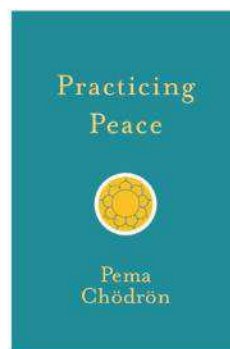
Jarrett Stephens. Multnomah, \$15.99 trade paper (224p) ISBN 978-0-7352-9119-5

In this uplifting debut, Stephens, teaching pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, Tex., looks at 10 Bible stories that take place on mountains, sharing a lesson from each. Many significant events recorded in the Bible involved mountain moments, he explains, such as Abraham’s call to sacrifice his son on Mt. Moriah, Moses’s meeting with God on Mt. Sinai, and Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane on Mt. Olivet. Stephens writes that all Christians need to climb mountains, one step at a time, in their spiritual pilgrimages, but they can do so figuratively instead of literally, by experiencing God through the mountain narratives left behind: “If Jesus made the choice to be apart from the crowds and disciples to spend time with his Father, shouldn’t I do the same? Don’t I need this uninterrupted time with God?” Stephens explores how Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount teaches Christians to pray and how his suffering on Mt. Calvary teaches what it means to love—and he encourages readers to reflect on those lessons and apply them to their own lives in what he calls “climbing exercises,” included at the end of his book. Christian readers feeling weary or stagnant in their faith will find that Stephen’s book will help clarify the paradox of life with God, a restful adventure. (Aug.)

Practicing Peace

Pema Chödrön. Shambhala, \$12.95 trade paper (96p) ISBN 978-1-611806-137

Drawing from her talks and focusing on the contemporary world, Chödrön (*The Places That Scare You*) offers teachings on practicing peace in this short, insightful book. When the heart closes itself off and the mind becomes rigid, she writes, it is easy to justify hatred against others. Instead, Chödrön tells readers to cultivate



the courage to have a change of heart: do not harden the self, sit with the uneasiness and feeling of threat, and stay in that tenderness. The condensed instruction Chödrön pro-

vides is to “stay with the initial tightening and don’t spin off.” By turning to the practices of patience, sitting meditation, and *bodhicitta* (the impulse toward enlightenment and nonself), among others, she believes it is possible to recognize *shenpa* (the experience of being hooked) early and to refrain from escalating into anger. She writes that sitting in patience with fundamental fear and insecurity allows fearlessness and genuine curiosity to grow. Chödrön teaches readers how to pause and let experiences pierce the heart so that the sparks of aggression may burn themselves out, leaving a positive sense of groundlessness and insecurity. These are familiar teachings to those acquainted with her work, but her approach remains invaluable for guidance on working with hatred and anger. (Aug.)

Science and Spiritual Practices

Rupert Sheldrake. Counterpoint, \$26 (240p) ISBN 978-1-64009-117-7

Biologist Sheldrake attempts to beat new atheists at their own game by using science to shore up devotion to spiritual practices in this persuasive appeal for a more enchanted world. To do that, he considers seven practices that are spiritually fulfilling while also having proven health benefits: meditation, gratitude, connecting with the non-human world, human-plant relationships, ritual, singing, and pilgrimage. For each, he provides a brief, intriguing history of its rise and modern diminishment across various traditions. Sheldrake pines for his vision of a less profane, more individualized past, as he makes clear through his laments about loss of connection to nature and the secularization of pilgrimages. He draws on a wide range of studies to show benefits for each type of worship: meditation increases the brain’s gray matter,

gratitude leads to better health, and group singing enhances abilities to concentrate. A few fuzzy moments, including reliance on many studies about improved happiness and overly speculative accounts (such as his claims that ritual repetitions create an inheritable memory across generations), do not overwhelm the otherwise convincing work. With accessible suggestions, clear arguments, and an encouraging tone, Sheldrake makes a good case for reincorporating bygone spiritual habits. (Aug.)

The Year of Our Lord 1943: Christian Humanism in an Age of Crisis

Alan Jacobs. Oxford Univ., \$29.95 (256p) ISBN 978-0-19-086465-1

Jacobs (*How to Think*), professor of humanities at Baylor University, explores the response of Christian humanists to the global conflagration of WWII in this precise survey. Jacobs focuses on five well-known figures: W.H. Auden, T.S. Eliot, C.S. Lewis, Jacques Maritain, and Simone Weil. Though four of them are white men, they do represent both Catholic and Protestant thought, and were not all in agreement. Taking the year 1943 as a pivot point when the military victory of the allied forces seemed likely, the work considers how Auden, Eliot, Lewis, Maritain, Weil, and their circles made sense of the war and their moral responsibilities during and after the conflict. The book is structured around the questions they posed, and proposed answers to, including: Is our cause just? What is the use of scholarship in wartime? What is the role of the supernatural in worldly evil? What is the role of moral force when confronting new, dangerous technologies? Is patriotism perverse? And what is the place of Christian, humanist education in constructing a more peaceful world? While Jacobs can only begin to scratch the surface of such complex debates, his book is an erudite collective portrait of postwar Christian intellectuals. (Aug.)

Becoming Jesus: The Making of a Prophet

Michael Berens. MJBerensResearch, \$9.95 trade paper (228p) ISBN 978-1-73204-050-2

Berens, a freelance writer, discusses the historical background and personal

development of Jesus Christ in this enjoyable speculative biography. Beginning with the premise that Jesus would have had similar experiences to those of his contemporaries, Berens marshals archaeological evidence as well as historical and biblical scholarship to explore what Jesus's everyday life was like as well as which events and influences may have led him to make his choices. Taking a strictly historical approach, Berens situates Jesus as a Galilean man among other Galilean men, experiencing the events of his lifetime—the hardships of life under Roman rule, the recent history of religious violence—just as his contemporaries (particularly John the Baptist) did. Berens's approach is matter-of-fact and sticks close to the arc of Jesus's life as known through the Bible, continually bringing the reader back to the everyday realities of first-century Palestine and the notion that the rationales for some decisions (particularly spiritual ones) are only known to the individual making them. Reaching no real conclusions, Berens's rehashing of scholarship will appeal to those looking for a primer on Jesus's life. (BookLife)

The Old Testament Case for Nonviolence

Matthew Curtis Fleischer. Epic Octavius the Triumphant, \$12.99 trade paper (254p) ISBN 978-0-9994306-0-6

Addressing Christians who struggle with reconciling Old Testament images of a violent God with New Testament images of a peaceful Jesus, Fleischer, an attorney, argues that God engages in "incremental ethical revelation," gradually revealing Christianity's nonviolent moral standard. Beginning with a comprehensive listing of Old Testament accounts of God committing or ordering Israel to commit violence, Fleischer acknowledges that humans throughout millennia have used these stories to justify slavery, apartheid, slaughter of indigenous peoples, and other atrocities. Fleischer claims that Israel's Mosaic Law, compared to contemporaneous ancient Near Eastern religions, offered significant moral advancement in warfare policy, treatment of the disadvantaged, and management of bloodlust. Arguing that

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FICTION

A Big Ship at the Edge of the Universe
Alex White. Orbit, ISBN 978-0-316-41206-3, July

A Duke by Default: Reluctant Royals, Book 2
Alyssa Cole. Avon, ISBN 978-0-06-268556-8, July

Heart of Glass *Nicole Jacquelyn*. Forever, ISBN 978-1-5387-1185-9, July

International Guy: Paris, New York, Copenhagen *Audrey Carlan*. Montlake Romance, ISBN 978-1-5039-0318-0, July

Ocean Light *Nalini Singh*. Berkley, ISBN 978-1-101-98782-7, June

Unbridled *Diana Palmer*. HQN, ISBN 978-1-3350-1-2869, July

★ **Stray Magic** *Kelly Meding*. Harper Voyager, ISBN 978-0-06-284767-6, June

Artificial Condition *Martha Wells*. Tor.com, ISBN 978-1-250-18692-8, May

Corpsepaint *David Peak*. Word Horde, ISBN 978-1-933905-38-3, May

NONFICTION

The Ascent of John Tyndall: Victorian Scientist, Mountaineer, and Public Intellectual
Roland Jackson. Oxford Univ., ISBN 978-0-19-878895-9, July

Universe in Creation: A New Understanding of the Big Bang and the Emergence of Life
Roy R. Gould. Harvard Univ., ISBN 978-0-674-97607-8, May

God's "introductory moral lessons" included teaching obedience and trust in God rather than military might and temporarily sanctioning limited violence while leading people from retribution to restorative justice, Fleischer contends that God's "end goal" was always the revelation of the "universally applicable moral code" of nonviolence and enemy love preached by Jesus. In a section entitled "Maybe God Didn't Do It," Fleischer suggests that human misinterpretation may be responsible for the violent portrayal of God. While some biblical scholars may quarrel with Fleischer's argument for chronological divine revelation, Fleischer makes a strong argument for a Christian embrace of nonviolence based on both testaments. (BookLife)

Editor's note: Reviews noted as "BookLife" are for self-published books received via BookLife, PW's program for indie authors.

Children's/YA

Picture Books

Joy

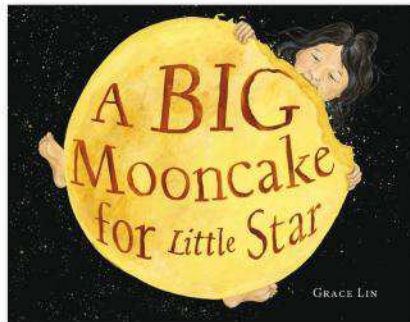
Corrinne Averiss, illus. by Isabelle Follath. Words & Pictures, \$17.95 (32p) ISBN 978-1-91027-766-9

Fern's elderly Nanna doesn't smile anymore. She's listless and withdrawn, and her once-cheery home now feels gray and dusty. Mom doesn't know what's wrong: "It's like the joy has gone out of her life," she tells Fern. Once Fern understands what "joy" means ("Like when we all dance after dinner?"), she determines to capture some at the local park—a puppy's bounce in a box, a baby's giggles in a can, sun sparkles in a saucepan—and take it all to her grandmother. But joy isn't quite so easily given, or is it? While Nanna does perk up considerably at the end, her initial condition seems so serious that the speedy transformation may leave readers wondering what sent her into a tailspin in the first place. But newcomer Follath's sweet, heart-on-her-sleeve pictures, Fern's sense of agency, and the story's core conceit—that you can't package joy—may strike a chord with readers. Ages 3–6. (Aug.)

Loretta's Gift

Pat Zietlow Miller, illus. by Alea Marley. Little Bee, \$17.99 (40p) ISBN 978-1-4998-0681-6

Loretta's aunt and uncle are having a baby, and while Loretta isn't clear on all the details ("Loretta looked at Aunt Esme's belly. Could it hold all that and a baby?"), she sees that everyone has something to give the new arrival, and she wants in on the action. But without money ("Her penny collection wasn't enough") or adult motor skills (Mom knits baby caps, Uncle Jax assembles the cradle), what can a kid do? Eventually, she discovers that being an eager helper and enthusiastic cousin—organizing little Gabe's hats, feeding him mashed bananas, cooing "Who's the best baby on the block?"—makes her, in Aunt Esme's words, "the best gift Gabe ever got." Miller (*Be Kind*) and debut artist Marley's straightforward, mostly unsentimental treatment and diverse cast (Loretta, her parents, and Aunt Esme are brown skinned; Uncle Jax is white) make a familiar story



A little girl meets a large, celestial pastry in *A Big Mooncake for Little Star* (reviewed on this page).

feel fresh as it focuses wholly on how even the smallest members of a family can take on more mature roles. Ages 3–6. (Aug.)

★ A Big Mooncake for Little Star

Grace Lin. Little, Brown, \$17.99 (40p) ISBN 978-0-316-40448-8

Nighttime paintings by Lin (*Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*) add magic to this fable about why the moon waxes and wanes. The story's events unfold against the velvety black of the night sky as Mama and Little Star, dressed in black pajamas spangled with yellow stars, work on their mooncake (an Asian holiday treat, Lin explains in an author's note) in the kitchen. Mama takes the cake out of the oven and lays it "onto the night sky to cool." She tells Little Star not to touch it, and Little Star attends but awakens in the middle of the night and remembers the cake. A double-page spread shows Little Star's speculative glance on the left and the huge golden mooncake—or is it the round, golden full moon?—on the right. Whichever it is, Little Star takes a nibble from the edge, another the next night, and so on until the moon wanes to a delicate crescent. Lin successfully combines three distinctive and memorable elements: a fable that avoids seeming contrived, a vision of a mother and child living in cozy harmony, and a night kitchen of Sendakian proportions. Ages 4–8. (Aug.)

Good Dog

Cori Doerrfeld. HarperCollins, \$17.99 (40p) ISBN 978-0-06-266286-6

A black-and-white stray with a wistful look grabs a chance to do good in this story by Doerrfeld (*The Rabbit Listened*). The dog spots a neighborhood preschooler and her mother headed for the park, then

follows her, saves her stuffed animal, returns it, and finds a new home in the process. The text is the twist: it's a series of fixed, easy-to-read phrases ("Sad dog. Good dog! Hopeful dog. Search dog.") that follow a variety of pooches throughout the pages. "Sad dog" follows a spread of the hungry stray getting booted from a bakery while another owner says "Good dog!" to his own hound. "Hopeful dog" describes the stray as it trails the girl to the park, and "Search dog" accompanies its setting out to find her among hordes of diverse parkgoers. Doerrfeld's spreads recall Lauren Castillo's, with friendly figures outlined in soft black. This dose of cuteness also provides a tale of heroism, in which the stray dog's watchfulness and initiative earn it a new chance at life. Ages 4–8. Agent: Rachel Orr, Prospect Agency. (Aug.)

How to Be a T. Rex

Ryan North, illus. by Mike Lowery. Dial, \$17.99 (32p) ISBN 978-0-399-18624-0

North (*Romeo and/or Juliet*) and Lowery (*Random Illustrated Facts*) give T. rex a fresh twist by asking what the toothy theropod can teach children about harnessing great power for good. Brown-skinned Sal wishes she was a T. rex, but a visual accounting shows that she just isn't, at least right now: "Teeth: okay, could be pointier." "Body: Tiny, often ignored." With hilarious ease, Sal soon turns into a tyrannosaur merely by sitting up in bed at night and concentrating. Now she tastes power: "No door can hold you! You can eat whatever you want!" But living as a T. rex among humans demands compromise. "They don't like it when you eat their food." Is it possible to maintain a dinosaur-style sense of one's own awesomeness and live with other humans? It is, Sal learns. "I don't let people ignore me or push me around, but I'm careful not to stomp on any humans." Lowery's unsteady lettering and goofy human figures with bean-shaped noses contribute to the book's laughs and help keep its stay-strong lesson from descending into sentimentality. Ages 4–8. (Aug.)

Maximilian Villainous

Margaret Chiu Greanias, illus. by Lesley Breen Withrow. Running Press, \$17.99 (40p) ISBN 978-0-76246-297-1

Greanias makes her debut with crack-

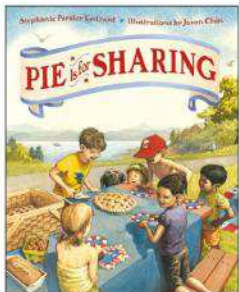
IN THE SUMMERTIME

For readers dreaming of summer, these four books will hit the spot.

Pie Is for Sharing

Stephanie Parsley Ledyard, illus. by Jason Chin. Roaring Brook/Porter, \$17.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-62672-562-1

A group gathers at a grassy riverfront park for leisurely Fourth of July festivities. The story begins with a focus on the pie that a family brings: "It starts out whole/ and round. Then... you can slice it/ into as many pieces/ as you



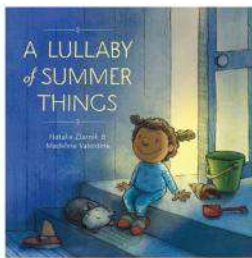
wish./ Almost." But the day calls for sharing beyond pie—"A book is for sharing./ A ball is nice for sharing, too./ And a tree?/ A tree is always shared," Ledyard writes. In watercolor and gouache, Chin illustrates scenes brushed with gentle, lemony light as realistically expressive children jump rope,

splash in the water, build sand castles, and explore. At dusk, everyone settles in to enjoy a fireworks display ("And a blanket?/ A breeze?/ The sky?/ These are for sharing.") and a second berry pie. This is a visceral celebration of summertime, community, and open-ended play. Ages 2–6. *Author's agent: Alexandra Penfold, Upstart Crow Literary. (May)*

A Lullaby of Summer Things

Natalie Ziarnik, illus. by Madeline Valentine. Random/Schwartz & Wade, \$17.99 (40p) ISBN 978-1-101-93552-1

At twilight, a child and her family—all have simple, doll-like faces with rounded noses—return to their rural cottage home from a day at the beach: "A screen door



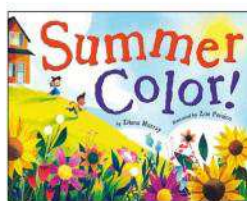
sings/ a lullaby of summer things." In quiet, rhyming text, Ziarnik describes the mixed-race family's evening routine (the mother feeds the baby, the older children take a bubble bath). As bedtime approaches, the child also reflects on their seashore

outing: "And you remember the/ beach that day—/ the sea so cool,/ sails far away." The child's recollections play out in Valentine's gouache spreads. Misty, cloudlike waves roll in as the girl and her family—friendly, white dog included—play in the water and sand. Though special days must end, Ziarnik suggests, warm memories are carried onward into the present. Ages 4–8. *Author's agent: Liza Voges, Eden Street. Illustrator's agent: Rebecca Sherman, Writers House. (May)*

Summer Color!

Diana Murray, illus. by Zoe Persico. Little Brown, \$17.99 (40p) ISBN 978-0-316-37094-3

Murray offers a gentle tribute to the colors of summer, centering on two siblings who live in a verdant countryside rendered in vivid digital art. Murray writes in descriptive couplets: "The sparrows keep chirping a song, soft and



mellow,/ and sunflowers reach up with petals so yellow." As the children run past their yard, storm clouds gather; Persico's sunny spreads are overtaken by moody grays, then "Rain batters down on

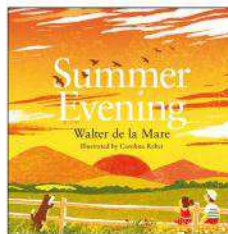
the blustery scene,/ as cardinals fly into treetops so green." The children pass a pond covered in pink water lilies, a white waterfall, and picnickers dashing for cover with purple blankets. Back at home and cozy, the siblings (with their cousin who, curiously, stayed behind) watch lightning strike before the sun returns. Murray (*City Shapes*) presents a lively color primer while conveying the building excitement of a summer storm. Ages 4–8.

Author's agent: Brienne Johnson, Writers House. Illustrator's agent: Anne Moore Armstrong, Bright USA. (May)

Summer Evening

Walter de la Mare, illus. by Carolina Rabei. Faber & Faber, \$15.95 (32p) ISBN 978-0-571-31466-9

In the first of a series based on the Walter de la Mare poems that appeared in the 1913 collection *Peacock Pie*, Rabei presents nostalgic visuals alongside an eight-line paean to summer. A family of four sits in the evening at an outdoor table, where they enjoy a cherry dessert. De la Mare's poem muses on the quiet sights and sounds of the



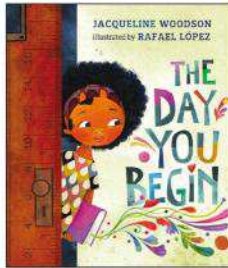
family's farm: "In the dewy fields the cattle lie/ Chewing the cud 'neath a fading sky." Successive wordless spreads augment the poem's imagery. As the children explore the farmyard and the swaying grass of the fields, the sinking sun

casts a fiery glow over the distant hills. Another spread features the farm's various animals—pigs, a cow, geese, chickens, horses, and Old Rover the dog—nestling in for the evening. Rabei renders the screen-print images in tawny and olive green tones. While the children wear modern clothing, the tranquil pages carry a sense of timelessness. Ages up to 5. *(June)*

★ The Day You Begin

Jacqueline Woodson, illus. by Rafael López. Penguin/Paulsen, \$18.99 (32p)
ISBN 978-0-399-24653-1

Woodson (*Brown Girl Dreaming*) imagines being “an only” in the classroom—what it’s like to be the only one with an accent (“No one understands the way words curl from your mouth”), the only one who stayed home during summer vacation (“What good is this/ when other students were flying/ and sailing”), the only one whose lunch box is filled with food “too strange or too unfamiliar for others to love as you do.” Without prescribing sympathy, Woodson’s poetic lines give power to each child’s experience. She describes the moment when the girl who didn’t go on vacation speaks her truth, her “voice stronger than it was a minute ago.” She has cared for her sister all summer, she tells her classmates, reading and telling stories: “Even though we were right on our block it was like/ we got to go EVERYWHERE.” And “all at once” in the seconds after sharing one’s story, something shifts, common ground is revealed, and “the world opens itself up a little wider/ to make some space for you.” López (*Drum Dream Girl*) paints the book’s array of children as students in the same classroom; patterns and colors on the children’s clothing and the growing things around them fill the spreads with life. Woodson’s gentle, lilting story and López’s artistry create a stirring portrait of the courage it takes to be oneself: “There will be times when you walk into a room and no one there is quite like you until the day you begin/ to share your stories.” Ages 5–8. *Author’s agent: Kathleen Nishimoto, William Morris Endeavor. Illustrator’s agent: Stefanie Von Borstel, Full Circle. (Aug.)*



ling dialogue in this story about being different. As his name suggests, monster Maximillian Villainous comes from a family famous for their villainy. But to the family’s chagrin, Max is not like the others. While his relations enjoy playing tricks on Santa Claus, Mother Nature, and the like, Maximillian counters their mischief with helpfulness and kindness, even writing the Tooth Fairy an apology note after one grievous incident. When Max brings home the most unsuitable of sidekicks—a bunny—his mother is firm: he can only keep the animal if the pair can succeed at a devious task. Max sincerely attempts to meet these demands (“Should be easy to make a baby cry,” he thinks while plotting against Cupid), but his sensitive nature wins out every time. Childlike mixed-media illustrations by Withrow (*Bunny Bus*) playfully depict monster life (eyeballs for dinner, anyone?), while Max’s conflicting emotions play expressively across his features. A clever, surprising ending emphasizes that different isn’t always so

different after all. Ages 4–8. *Author’s agent: Rick Richter, Aevitas Creative Management. Illustrator’s agent: Christina Tugeau, Catugeau Agency. (Aug.)*

Snow Pony and the Seven Miniature Ponies

Christian Trimmer, illus. by Jessie Sima. Simon & Schuster, \$17.99 (48p) ISBN 978-1-4814-6268-6

In what might be a send-up of a popular entertainment franchise, Trimmer (*Simon’s New Bed*) retells the “Snow White” story with ponies in all the important roles. The story fits surprisingly neatly into its new form: “Once upon a time there was a pony who had a coat as white as snow and a mane as black as ebony.” In addition to being beautiful, Snow Pony hosts performances with her human friend, Charmaine, and Charmaine’s dog, Hunter. When jealous Queenie lures Snow Pony away from farm and stage and into the woods (using apples, naturally), she encounters the seven miniature ponies of the title. Rendered by Sima (*Not Quite Narwhal*), they’re a fresh upgrade from dwarfs; each is a different color, with

forelocks that hang cunningly over their eyes, and each has a special role (“I gather water.” “I take care of the bees.” “I’m a tax attorney”). The new ending trades princely kisses for a friendly reunion and an improved performance retinue. This book will top the pile of bedtime favorites in horse-loving households, with jokes thrown in for the grown-ups, to boot. Ages 4–8. *Agent: Thao Le, Sandra Dijkstra & Assoc. (Aug.)*

Fiction

Cavall in Camelot:

A Dog in King Arthur’s Court

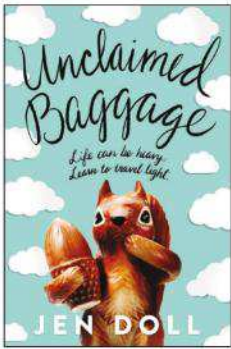
Audrey Mackaman. Harper, \$16.99 (256p)
ISBN 978-0-06-249448-1

Cavall is a deerhound puppy who can’t keep up with his skilled and boastful brother, Glessic. After both are adopted, Cavall by King Arthur and Glessic by Mordred, they are drawn into the mysterious and sinister world of Camelot. Good-hearted Cavall wants only to protect Arthur and is helped by both Merlin and the Lady of the Lake, whose advice offers wisdom for readers, as well. Glessic is bound to Mordred by Morgana, which puts the pups on opposite sides as Mordred tries to drive Arthur mad through a potion that brings terrible nightmares. Relying on his pack and the creatures who advise him, Cavall tries to save Arthur. Debut author Mackaman seamlessly weaves myths of Camelot together with universal lessons, including the best way to defend those one cares about and the merits of cooperation. Cavall’s confusion about complicated events and his unintentional blunders make him a relatable and entertaining narrator. This warm and action-packed series kickoff will leave readers eager to see what adventures Cavall stumbles into next. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Lauren Galit, LKG Agency. (Aug.)*

★ Unclaimed Baggage

Jen Doll. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$17.99 (384p) ISBN 978-0-374-30606-9

What happens to the suitcases left unclaimed at airports? They go to stores that sort through, and sell, their contents. Sixteen-year-old Doris works at just such a store in a small Alabama town, as do Nell and fellow high schooler Grant, and the three teens become unlikely friends. Doris



is an anomaly in their conservative town because she doesn't believe in God—and doesn't mind saying so; Nell's family has just moved from Chicago; and Grant was a

local football hero, until his drinking cost him his position on the team, his girlfriend, and his self-respect. In her YA debut, Doll skillfully integrates three alternating voices—especially Doris, with her gift for finding things—in a story threaded through with relationships and identities lost and found. Over the course of the summer, junk and treasures, both sentimental and real, pass through the shop; family history is reclaimed; and things, stories, and people find new places to belong. Ages 12–up. *Agent: Ryan Harbage, Fischer-Harbage Agency. (Sept.)*

Heretics Anonymous

Katie Henry. HarperCollins/Tegen, \$17.99 (336p) ISBN 978-0-06-269887-2

In this entertaining coming-of-age story, five free-thinking students launch a clandestine campaign against their school's rigid policies and practices, with unanticipated consequences. When his father's job necessitates yet another move to a new town, Michael, a devout atheist who anticipates being miserable at his Catholic high school, finds himself unexpectedly invited into a "study group" of self-proclaimed heretics. Lucy wants to be a priest, Eden practices "Celtic Reconstructionist Polytheism," Avi is Jewish and gay, and Max is Unitarian Universalist. Through creative, anonymous measures, they contest the sex education curriculum, the dress code, and the dismissal of a lesbian teacher for marrying her long-term partner. The school authorities and some students attempt to discover the subversives and restore discipline, while a developing romance between Michael and Lucy challenges both students to respect the other's beliefs. When Michael commits an act that threatens his newfound friendships, he undergoes a spiritual awakening of

sorts, which the author pulls off without sentimentality. None of Henry's multi-dimensional, multi-ethnic characters fall into stereotypes, and her snappy dialogue sparkles throughout this skillfully crafted debut. Ages 13–up. *Agent: Sarah LaPolla, Bradford Literary Agency. (Aug.)*

The Second Life of Ava Rivers

Faith Gardner. Razorbill, \$17.99 (352p) ISBN 978-0-451-47830-6

Almost 12 years earlier, Vera's family was shattered when Ava, Vera's six-year-old fraternal twin sister, disappeared. Since then, Vera's parents have been distant and she keeps to herself at school. But everything abruptly changes when Ava, who has been imprisoned by a kidnapper for more than a decade, is found and returns home. Now, Vera's mother and father begin to act like parents again; her estranged older brother (who, like the rest of the family, blamed himself for Ava's disappearance) comes for visits; and Ava's childhood friend, Max, is back in their lives. Still, there are unanswered questions: Why doesn't Ava remember her childhood? And why is she reluctant to give information about her kidnapper, whose whereabouts are unknown? Gardner (*Perdita*) shows compassion as she delves into Vera's emotions and Ava's complicated sensibility while making potentially sensational subject matter seem plausible. Fans of *The Face on the Milk Carton* and *Room* will revel in the book's generous supply of suspense, and although readers may separate truth from lies long before the characters do, they will stay anxiously glued to the pages. Ages 14–up. *Agent: Claire Anderson-Wheeler, Regal Hoffmann and Assoc. (Aug.)*

This Story Is a Lie

Tom Pollock. Soho Teen, \$18.99 (336p) ISBN 978-1-61695-911-1

No one is as they seem in Pollock's YA debut. Peter, 17, uses his savantlike math abilities to parse his daily experiences and cope with his severe anxiety. After his mother, a scientist, is nearly killed and his twin sister, Bel, goes missing, Peter is kidnapped by his mother's colleagues (or maybe her would-be assassins), and math becomes Peter's lens for deciding whom he can trust. This shape-shifter of a novel explores the tragic cost of family secrets

and lies. Its use of math is fresh and fascinating, but Pollock mashes Peter's mental health issues into a spy/serial-killer/action/revenge/family story, which morphs among genres and doubles back to cover Peter's personal backstory of being bullied and his close relationship with Bel. Though flashbacks provide insight into Peter's past, they sap momentum—and because characters are constantly lying and changing allegiances, it's challenging to keep everyone (and everything) straight. The story offers a fascinating premise, but the unending action and disjointed narration result in a bumpy reading experience. Ages 14–up. *(Aug.)*

Nonfiction

The Sinking of the 'Vasa':

A Shipwreck of Titanic Proportions

Russell Freedman, illus. by William Low. Holt/Godwin, \$18.99 (44p) ISBN 978-1-62779-866-2

This picture book retelling of the failed 1628 maiden voyage of the Swedish warship *Vasa* is another accessible, historical account by the late Freedman (*Lincoln: A Photobiography*). "Designed to terrify enemies and dazzle everyone who saw her, the *Vasa* was almost as long as a city block." A vivid narrative chronicles the elaborate wooden ship's construction; its extremely brief first—and last—sail in Stockholm's harbor (the *Vasa* traveled less than a mile before wind gusts toppled it); and the remarkable 20th-century salvage operation that raised it from the salty waters and preserved much of its hull. Full-color artwork by Low (*Daytime Nighttime*) depicts the action, especially the underwater recovery efforts. Light-infused scenes bathed in aquamarine hues, including a clever gatefold of the ship's remains being lifted toward the surface, are remarkably lifelike in perspective and scale, and realistic moments (glinting fish scales, the bulky folds of a diver's suit) complement the detailed storytelling. The author ends with the meaningful observation that this restored former weapon of war, cannons still unfired, sits in its home country, also the birthplace of Nobel Peace Prize creator Alfred Nobel. Ages 5–9. *(Aug.)*

“Stories hold greater appeal if I’m given the leeway to interpret characters through my own imagination. Seeing cover images that are highly specific limit a story’s potential for me.”

Cover Bias

An erotic romance author makes a case for nonspecific cover images

BY KILBY BLADES

We all know how the saying goes: never judge a book by its cover. As broad-stroke life advice, it works. But readers rarely follow it when deciding which books to buy.

If a book’s cover art involves human models, the author may be on especially slippery ground. The perfect-looking people speak to someone, but to whom? Common wisdom advises authors to broadcast genre and win new readers through halting visuals. Yet the fact that we are not all intrigued by the same kinds of people makes the use of humans on covers problematic. If cover models alienate me, I won’t buy the book.

I’m not kidding. I don’t care how many people are talking about a book. I don’t care about five-star reviews. I don’t care if I love the blurbs, or how badly I’m dying for a great romance read—I won’t buy it.

I swear, I’m not a narcissist. It’s not about needing to see some mirror image of me. It’s not about me being black and wanting to find more African-American fiction. I dislike full-face images of humans on covers, no matter their ethnicities, genders, or body types. Stories hold greater appeal if I’m given the leeway to interpret characters through



my own imagination. Seeing cover images that are highly specific limit a story’s potential for me.

When seen through a marketing lens, leaving the door open to interpretation is a more inclusive practice. A 20-something romance reader may envision a strapping young man as the hero. A 50-something reader may view him as a silver fox. Allowing readers to imagine characters according to their own tastes engages them in a way that can’t be achieved via overly specific covers.

The deeper issue, of course, is connection: it’s the basest human desire. An increasing number of readers want assurances that a book will deliver a vicarious human experience through characters who feel real or relevant to them. Showing cover models who depict exclusive (and, frankly, debatable) standards of beauty undermines mass appeal.

This gets at other sensitivities: flawless-looking people on covers signal characters who will be light on flaws. Real people have dark circles under their eyes, scars, disabilities, tattoos they regret, and carry more than a few extra pounds. An idealized character depiction compromises readers’ ability to find something in common with the

protagonist and dashes their hopes to live vicariously through him or her.

I’ll stop long enough to acknowledge that there’s a market for model-heavy covers, and for stories with correspondingly idealized worlds. Among a certain demographic, these books are popular. But how many more copies could be sold without fully visible cover models? How many readers care more about compelling characters who form in their minds than about defined, idealized character images?

If an author is willing to devote hundreds of hours to writing and perfecting novels, he or she must believe that stories are important. Why write unless one feels that one’s stories need to be read? Books can’t (and shouldn’t try to) be everything to everyone. But to maximize readership, authors must recognize where books have universal appeal and capitalize on that universality wherever they can.

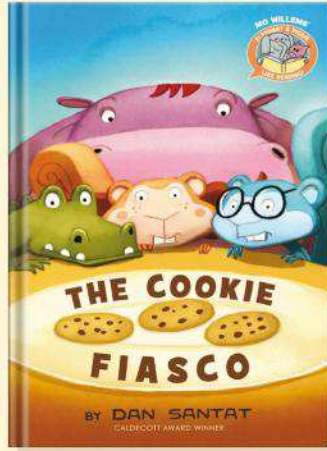
This is easier than it seems. Even in my genre (romance), in which cover models are pervasive, some of the most iconic books avoid full faces, and people, altogether. Christina Lauren’s *Beautiful Bastard*, Alice Clayton’s *Wallbanger*, and even E.L. James’s *Fifty Shades of Grey* signal genre without being overly specific.

Finding agnostic cover art isn’t easy, but there are a few tricks: if you’re designing a cover and you must use people, think twice about showing faces; maintain a sense of possibility by using ambiguous models; and avoid ethnic anchoring by converting images to grayscale, sepia, or alternative color scales. It could get the attention of a broader swath of readers. ■

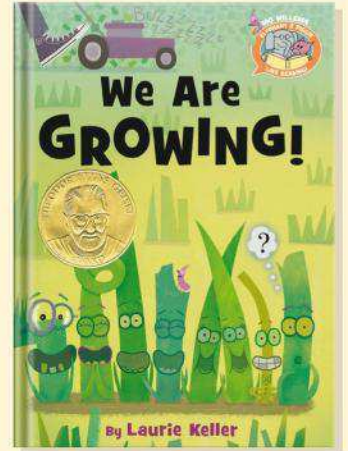
Kilby Blades is the author of the erotic romance novel Snapdragon (Luxe, 2017).

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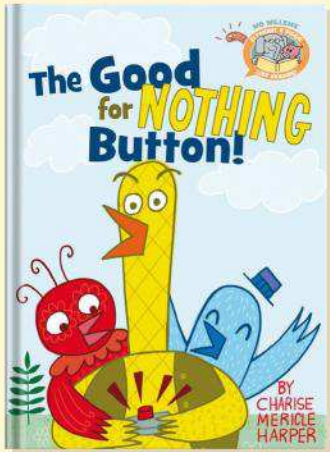
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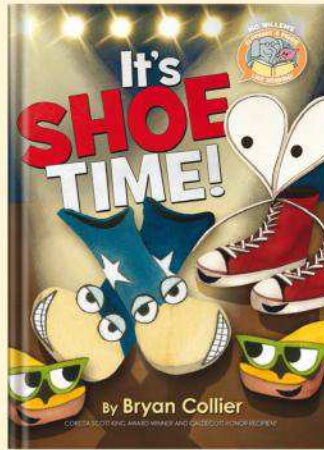
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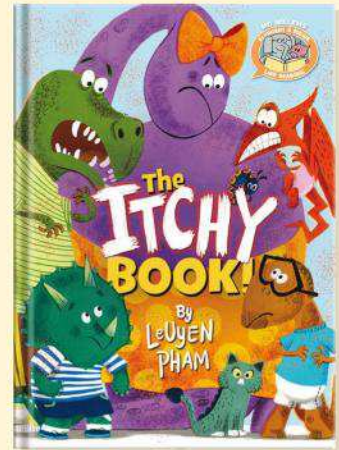
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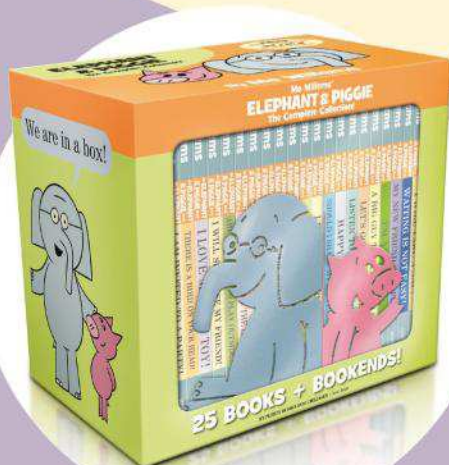
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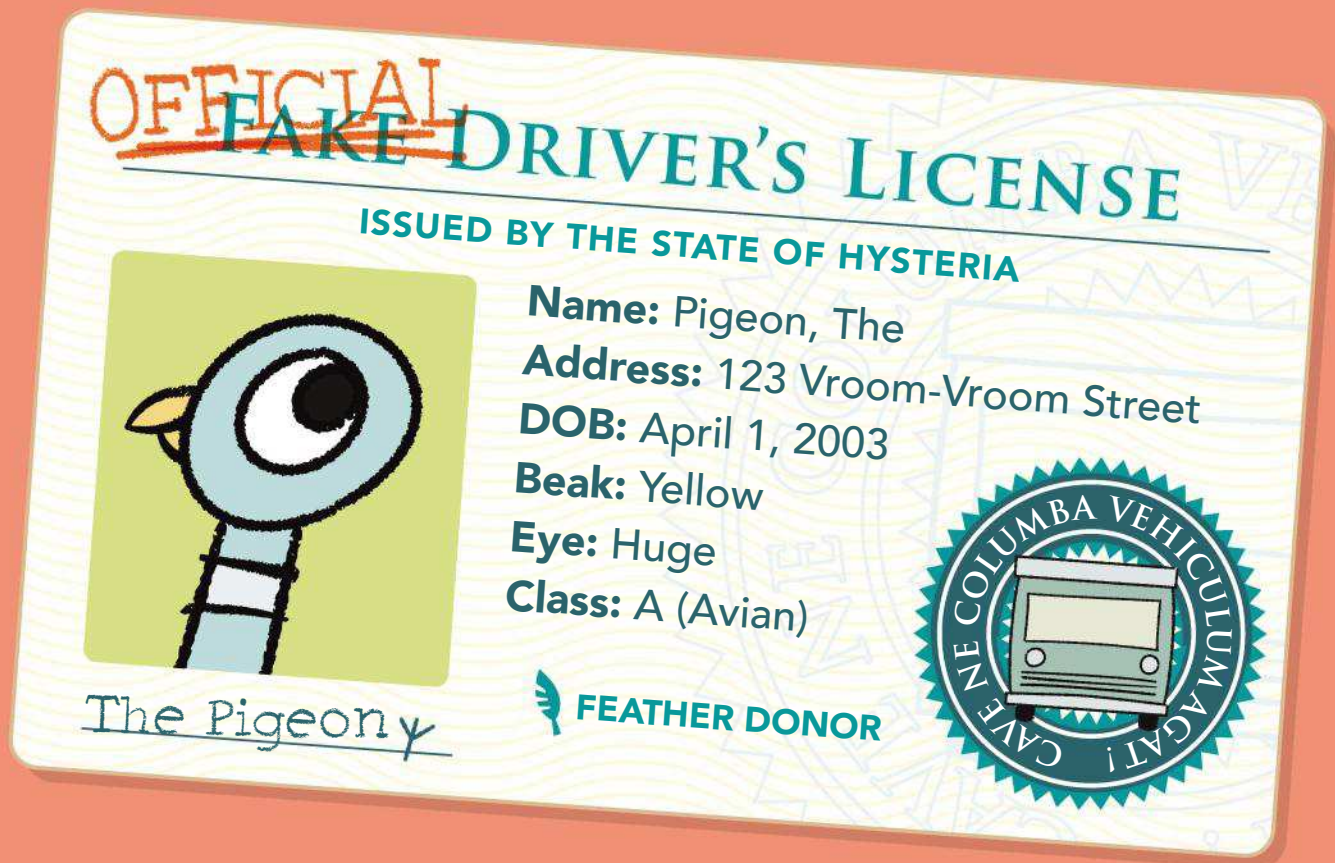
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