

**Issue 49**

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

As someone who was looking to get into publishing, I always found it hard to consistently keep up with what was happening in the industry. Remembering to visit separate websites, news sources, job portals and keep up with changes was quite challenging. I also know it can be difficult to find information, learn about trends in the industry, or about the specifics of roles that are not editorial.

*The Publishing Post* intends to provide all of this information and more to anyone wanting to learn about, or join, the publishing industry. We want to cover as much as we can for those, like us, who want to absorb as much of the industry as they can. *The Publishing Post* is a free resource that is encouraging, honest and

accessible to every single person who is considering publishing as a career.

*The Publishing Post* stands by the fact that 2022 is a time for breaking down barriers and encouraging diversity in the publishing industry. Learning about and being included in the industry should be for everyone.

The magazine is created by publishing hopefuls, for publishing hopefuls. Each and every person who works on the magazine each issue is dedicated to producing and educating fellow hopefuls with content that is informative and interesting.

Lastly, I just want to say a massive thank you to every single person who has supported, shared and

shouted about *The Publishing Post* since our first issue. On behalf of the whole team, we are so incredibly grateful and could not be more proud of the success.

Editor in Chief, Chelsea Graham

## STAY UP TO DATE

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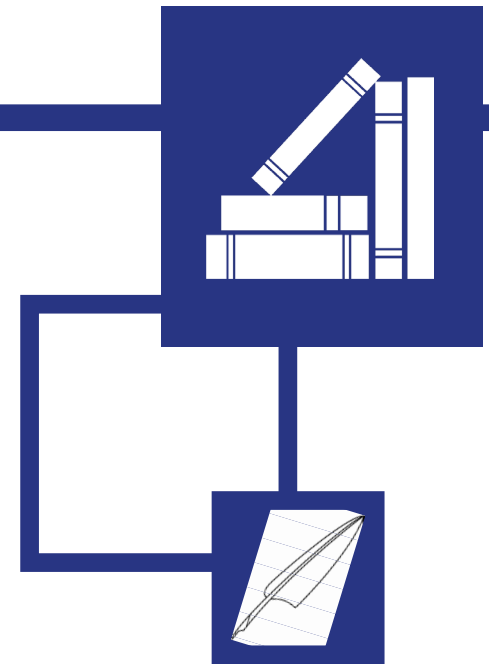
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# People in Publishing: Queen's Birthday Honours

BY MEGAN WHITLOCK  
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Alongside the Jubilee Celebrations that spanned the nation earlier this month, the start of June marked the annual release of the Queen's Birthday Honours list. The list, released every year, recognises a variety of figures in the book industry, from authors and illustrators to directors and librarians.

Notable names included James Daunt, Managing Director of Waterstones since May 2011 and ex-CEO of Barnes and Noble, who was made CBE for his services to publishing. Daunt has been colloquially referred to by the press in previous years as "the man who saved Waterstones," and the bookstore itself made headlines earlier this month for its acquisition of Blackwell's, the UK's largest independent bookseller.

Illustrator Sir Quentin Blake was another familiar face who made the list, perhaps best known for his illustrations of the work of children's author Roald Dahl. On his personal website, Blake made the following [statement](#):

"Of course it is an enormous privilege to be appointed a Companion of Honour, but it

is also of special interest to me because it is not, unlike so many awards, just a medal that is pinned on you. On the one hand it acknowledges what you have done previously, but on the other looks forward to what you are going to do in the future. I have every hope that I have more projects in view but my new role means that I will set about them with renewed effort and enthusiasm."

Joanne Harris, the current Chair of the Society of Authors and best known for her novels such as *Chocolat*, was awarded an OBE, whereas in wider organisations, Dr Darren Henley of Arts Council

England and chair of The Reading Agency, Matthew Littleford, have been awarded a CBE and MBE respectively.

On [The Reading Agency](#) website, Matthew is quoted as saying: "I am delighted to receive this award as part of the Platinum Jubilee Honours. I would like to pay tribute to the tireless work of The Reading Agency team, our brilliant library partners, and Arts Council England, for working with us to tackle the big challenges faced by people across the country through the proven power of reading. The transformative benefits of reading have never been more needed."



# Tom Parker's *Hope* Reaches Number One on *The Sunday Times* Bestseller List

BY HANNAH COLLINS  
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On 30 March, The Wanted singer, Tom Parker, sadly passed away at the age of thirty-three, after being diagnosed in October 2020 with an inoperable grade four glioblastoma. Despite the tragedy, before Tom's passing, it was announced that the musician was writing a memoir entitled *Hope: My Inspirational Life*, that traces a path from his working-class upbringing in Bolton, to his rise to fame with The Wanted and then onto his devastating cancer diagnosis.

Waterstones have described this memoir as "an inspiring story of determination and courage in the face of a horribly cruel disease," and the book has recently achieved a commendable milestone of making it to number one on *The Sunday Times* bestseller list. This accomplishment was announced by Parker's wife, Kelsey, on her Instagram Stories, where she expressed her pride and delight: "My husband... a *Sunday Times* no.1 bestselling author. Beyond proud of my love. What I'd give to celebrate with you one more time."

The book was first announced just a couple of weeks before the star's passing and was acquired by Blink Publishing, an adult fiction imprint that aims to produce innovative texts that can "engage, entertain, inform and excite a wide commercial audience." Publishing Director, Susannah Otter, said of this acquisition that, "along with millions of others, I was deeply moved by Tom's documentary and the courage he has shown in the face of his illness. This book will be a real beacon and we are honoured to publish it."

Tom also stated before his passing that his book, which was officially released at the end of May (two months ahead of its initial scheduled publication date in July), "is not about dying: It's a book about living. It's a book about finding hope in whatever situation you're dealt and living your best life no matter what. It will show you how having faith in hope and daring to dream means you can carry on, against all odds."

The posthumously-released memoir was co-written with Grant Brydon, an author and skilled music journalist, who also took to Instagram

to share the news of Tom's book reaching the number one bestseller spot with *The Sunday Times*. He penned that, "writing this with Tom is an experience that I feel privileged to have been a part of and will forever cherish. One of his aims for the book was to spread awareness of brain tumours, so it's great to see so many people being receptive to it and reading it." By documenting his journey and search for a cure, through chemotherapy and various other methods, Tom has been able to raise awareness of conditions like his own. Despite losing his life in such a tragic way, he has left behind a legacy that not only makes his family and fans proud but will ultimately help to save the lives of others in similar situations. Signed copies of the text are available to purchase now.



Photo Credit: @tomparker official on Instagram

# Edinburgh Book Festival Announces Line-Up for Second Year of The Business of Books

By CHARLOTTE BROOK

After the success of last year, Edinburgh Book Festival are again running a series of events dedicated to sharing ideas and expertise about how the book industry operates for everyone from publishing hopefuls to writers to industry professionals.

The total of six events will go ahead from the 15–26 August this summer featuring conversations with experts from the industry sharing their thoughts on some of the pressing issues publishing faces today as well as showcases from exciting literary talent.

So, what's on the agenda? Here's a look at the line-up for this year's The Business of Books.

First up on 15 August is *Beneath the Covers: Best Marketing Strategies of 2022*. Partnering with *The Bookseller*, this event takes a deep dive into the most creative marketing campaigns publishing has

brought this year. Industry professionals shortlisted for the 2022 British Book Awards give their insight as to where it all went right for campaigns such as indie publisher's 404 Ink Inklings series and Faber's bestselling *Beautiful World, Where Are You* by Sally Rooney.

Next, on 22 August is dedicated to new Scottish literary voices and independent publishers with *Shaping Scotland's Stories: New Voices Showcase*. On-stage authors and publishers come together to discuss the importance of searching for new Scottish stories and sharing them with the world. There will also be a reading from Glasgow-based poet Anna Cheung.

Continuing to celebrate Scottish literary talent, 23 August brings *The Scottish Spoken Word Showcase*. With live literature performances making a comeback after the pandemic put them on hold, this event gives them centre

stage. Nine spoken word artists will perform, yet not just for our entertainment, the event hopes to connect talent to international industry contacts in attendance, giving them the opportunity to further their art outside Scotland.

On 24 August is *Call My Agent! The Role of the Literary Agent*. Sometimes a role that those outside the industry don't quite understand, this event sheds light on the role of literary agents in the publishing process. Literary agents from across the UK come together to share their invaluable insight on what agents look for in submissions and how to build a bestselling writer's career. Definitely not one to miss if your dream is to become a literary agent, or if you just want to get an understanding of the role!

Next up is *Celebrating Inclusion*, which takes place on 25 August. This event



focuses on the importance of making literary events accessible for disabled people. The *Inklusion Guide* written by disabled writers Julie Farrell and Ever Dundas and published by Penguin Random House is the perfect how-to guide for what publishers should be doing for their events. The event is a conversation hosted by disability activist Sinead Burke and includes a poetry reading by a disabled writer, Jeda Pearl.

To round off the week of events, there is a panel on *The Evolution of Young Adult Literature*. As the first year that Edinburgh Book Festival have ran the YA Book Prize in partnership with *The Bookseller*, this event looks at how YA literature has grown over the decades, especially with the inclusion of more complex and

sensitive topics. There may even be some award-winning YA authors in attendance.

What a week of events for The Business of Books!

Tickets for The Business of Books events are pay what you can and go on sale from the website on Thursday 23 June, so mark your calendars!

## What else is on at Edinburgh Book Festival 2022?

That isn't all from this year's Edinburgh Book Festival! Events are running over two weeks from the 13–29 August, so don't worry if you can't make The Business of Books events, there will be plenty more for you to join in on! What's more, as well as hosting in-person events, around 200 events are also

taking place online. So, no matter where you are you won't miss out.

The rallying cry of this year's festival is *All Together Now* and the line-up certainly triumphs inclusivity across a huge range of themes.

In the *Black Joy* segment, Candice Carty-William, author of bestselling debut *Queenie*, introduces her new novel *People Person*. Eloghosa Osunde speaks about her debut novel *Vagabonds!* which explores the displaced, spiritual, and queer spaces in Nigerian Lagos.

In *Queer Love and Relationships*, Torrey Peters, author of *Detransition, Baby*, Imogen Binnie, author of *Nevada*, and Shola von Reinhold, author of *Lote*, are in conversation about the evolution of trans literature.

In *Women Behaving Badly*, Katherine Angel, author of *Tomorrow Sex Will Be Good Again*, and Amia Srinivasan, author of *The Right to Sex*, talk about their unflinching books on sex and consent. Mieko Kawakami is also in attendance discussing her latest novel, *All The Lovers In The Night*, and how the world would react if women told the truth about their lives.

These are just a taste of all the amazing events that Edinburgh Book Festival are hosting this year. Check them all out [here](#).



# Industry Insights: Eva Wong Nava

By Elizabeth Oladoyin, Elizabeth Guess, Kathryn Smith and Leyla Mehmet



Photo Credit: Eva Wong Nava

We interviewed Eva Wong Nava, the author of the YA historical fiction novel, *The House of Little Sisters*. Eva is known for her picture books which help children explore who they are, where they're from and what they can do to be movers and shakers in their world. She also has forthcoming picture books to be discovered. Eva writes for Words & Pictures, the Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators (SCBWI) British Isles e-zine. She can be found in the Land of Albion and is represented by Lydia Silver of Darley Anderson.

## Could you tell us a bit about your mentoring platform, Picture Book Matters?

I co-founded Picture Book Matters (PBM) in 2018 with my business partner, graphic artist and illustrator Debasmita Dasgupta (Smita), to provide a mentoring platform for picture book creators based in Asia. Both Smita and I were living and working in Singapore then, and we saw a gap in the publishing scene there in terms of learning and mentoring platforms for emerging picture book writers and illustrators. We wanted to contribute to the creative ecosystem in South and Southeast Asia, and felt that we could use our experiences, expertise and empathy to help creators like us (BAME or BIPOC) living and working in Asia to better understand children's book creation and publication. Now that we're both based in the UK, we are opening PBM to picture book creators from BAME or BIPOC backgrounds in the UK, US and Europe. Smita and I are strategic about this because we feel that it is important for PBM to continue the work we started in Singapore, to

provide writers-of-colour with a safe space to learn and be part of a growing and supportive community of authors and illustrators who identify as East, Southeast Asian, Black and/or Asian (Desi communities).

## What was the inspiration for you beginning to write?

I've always written for my children prior to being published – so, they are my inspiration. They wanted more stories after the last of their bedtime books came to an end, and to lull them to sleep, I would retell stories from my childhood about the Monkey God, the Moon Goddess and other folk and fairy tales from East and Southeast Asia. Later when my children grew older, I wrote these stories down as I was no longer a tired mother snatching minutes from the day to rest. During my daughters' childhood, I also made-up stories peppered with characters from Latin America, namely Peru, and Scotland. I cannot explain why these two countries, but it is possible these were the characters that I came across in books as a child and adult.

I write for my children's children. Books tend to have a longer life than their authors. I hope that my grandchildren will be able to read the books I'd written for their mothers long after I return to being fairy dust.

## Why is authentic representation and different types of diversity so important, particularly in children's books, and are mainstream publishers doing enough to include meaningful representation?

Any sort of representation ought to be meaningful and authentic, and yes, particularly in children's books. Young minds are impressionable, and children learn about who they are, their purpose, what they are capable of, and can do, through books. It is in stories that children find alternatives, possibilities and develop compassion and empathy because they see themselves in the pages of the books they read. Children root for the main character and other characters in the stories they identify with when they are immersed in the story world. Somehow, this rooting for the main character is inevitable,

and literary theory (Reader Response Theory, especially) shows this to be true.

It is important for every child reading to see themselves within the pages of books. As a writer-of-colour in the UK, I find this even more important, because I grew up on a diet of books that did not have people like me. I never questioned this as a child because I was interested in the story; stories were and are gateways to other worlds for me. But I did start to feel invisible, unaccounted for, as I grew older, when I realised that the heroes and heroines I was rooting for were based predominantly on white people's experiences and lives, and they also looked nothing like me. When I became a mother, this invisibility bothered me greatly. I wanted to see more of me represented in books, more of half of who my daughters are in the books they were reading.

My children are of dual-heritage. They are very comfortable in their skins and live with hyphenated identities: British-Chinese-Caucasian/White-European-East/Southeast Asian. For them, these are their possibilities, but they also grew up with very little representation of who they are in books. I can see that this eats away at them because each time there

is a book published or film screened that are peopled with diverse characters (other than white diverse characters: there is also diversity in Anglo-European identities), they are very excited and can't wait to read the book or watch the film.

When we speak of representation, we must ask ourselves, "But how is that character depicted?" (to paraphrase author of *The Night of Legends*, Leslie W). An East Asian character, along with dragons and peonies, on a book cover can be considered a form or representation. Certain representations can be stereotyped and clichéd. Many are reductionist and pejoratives of the culture and people being represented. Representation is broader than racial or ethnic representation. It is important for children to see other kinds of characters in books; characters that reflect real people in the world that we live in.

In the Anglo-European world, mainstream publishing is mainly a privileged industry, populated by white men and women with public-school, or private school education historically. It somehow still remains so, although the scene is changing to be more inclusive and representative. We are starting to see in some publishers the intention to



and advocacy for diversifying their workforce and in the books they publish. The industry, in response to data from surveys and studies, is sincerely trying to course correct.

But I do feel that more can be done, and I hope that this move towards more inclusion and representation of diversity is not merely a trend. Although the space has now been created to include more BAME stories or for writers-of-colour (WOC) to be traditionally published, there is still an expectation that WOC can only write “cultural” stuff, or own-voices stories. There is room for WOC to write about other things, like (Anglo-European) art history, for example, or retellings of Anglo-European fairy tales. I hope that, eventually, this pigeon-holing will give way to embracing WOC as writers who can write anything.

In terms of promotion, I am not seeing enough diversity when it comes to promoting and marketing under-represented authors and illustrators. In the UK, there seems to be this obsession with platform authors, so Emma Thompson is now writing picture books (which is fine). It would be wonderful to see Gemma Chan being

commissioned to write a children’s picture book or two, as well.

I would love to see more representation of under-represented authors writing in English who are not based in the UK, and for major UK bookstores to stock more books that are not just published by the big-four traditional publishers in the UK, EU and USA, but also by independent presses that often publish diverse books and authors who need the mainstream bookstores to support them.

### What are some of your all-time favourite picture books, and why?

There are too many to choose from, but I’ll pick three.

To start with, I would have to say *The Gruffalo*, as my daughters loved this tale, which Julia Donaldson had once said was inspired by a Chinese folk tale. I love how the tale is retold in rhyme and how someone weak and little can outwit someone strong and big. It’s a multi-layered story because it also shows us that strength lies in critical thinking and imagination, which reading helps children develop.

Again, from Julia Donaldson is *The Magic Paintbrush*, illustrated by Joel Stewart. I was so excited to see a Chinese girl on the cover that I had to buy it for my children. I also love how a child (thought to be little and weak) overcomes an emperor (thought to be strong and powerful). Donaldson gets my vote because these two stories champion the underdog.

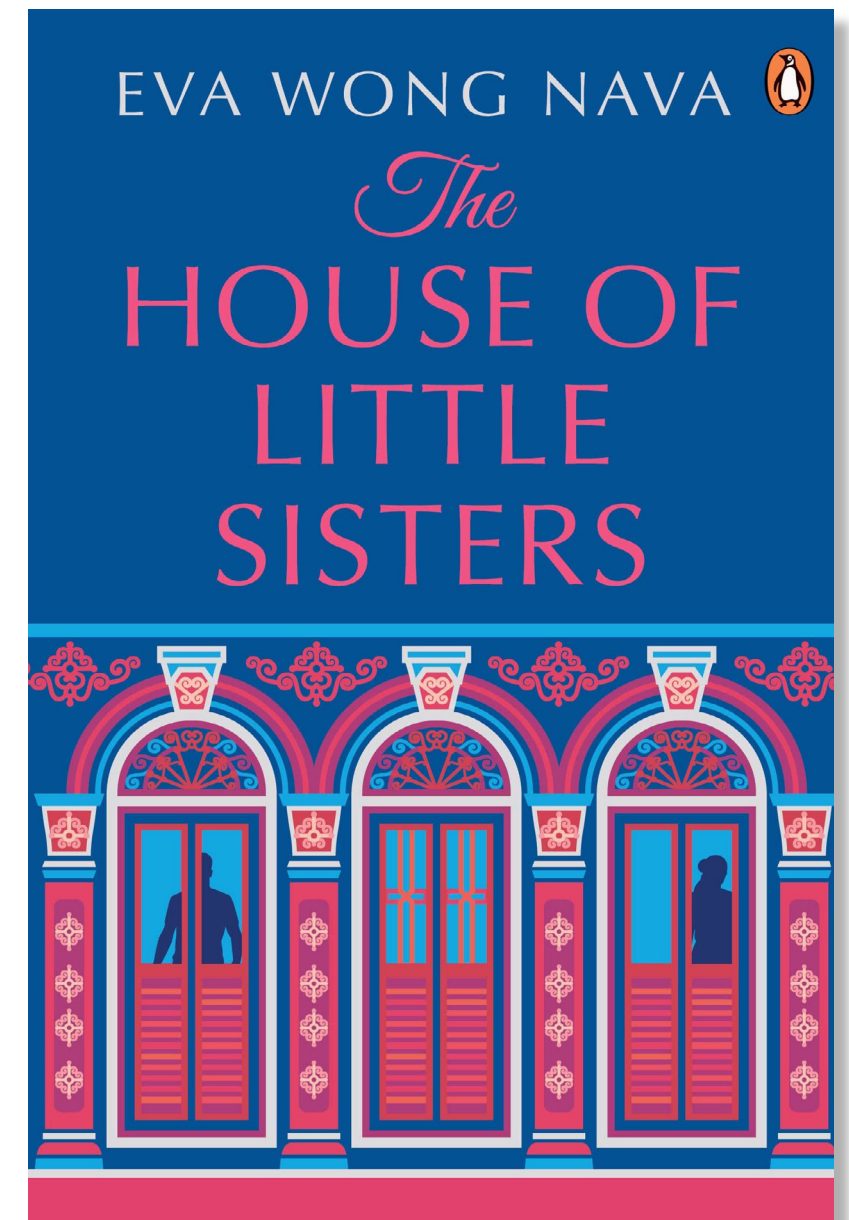
I am aware that the two books by Donaldson mentioned here may seem ironic choices, since I am an advocate for more representation of under-represented authors in mainstream publishing. But in all fairness, Donaldson spins a good yarn and that is the importance of storytelling. These two books were written in a different climate when the debate around cultural appreciation vs appropriation was non-existent.

My third favourite to mention is Baroness Floella Benjamin’s *Coming to England*, which I thought is an important book, not just for the Windrush generation and children, it’s also important for any child who is emigrating to England,

or emigrating in general. This picture book is about dreaming big, working hard and being determined. It’s a story filled with love and, most of all, finding a new home and fitting in. I love the illustrations by Diane Ewan as well. As a child of the Chinese diaspora and an emigrant to England in my young adulthood, the Baroness’s story resonated with me.

### Are there any 2022 book releases that you’re excited about?

On the middle-grade front: I am excited about Maisie Chan’s *Keep Dancing*, Lizzie Chu and I also can’t wait to read *Call Me Lion* by Camilla Chester. On the picture book front: *I am Nefertiti* by Annemarie Anang, illustrated by Natelle Quek, *Friends Are Friends Forever* by Dane Liu, illustrated by Lynn Scurfield.





# Comic Conventions and Their Publishing Power

BY EMMA REGAN AND JORDAN  
MAXWELL RIDGWAY

Comic Conventions are often seen as the gateway to ‘nerd heaven,’ with attendees dressing in their most creative cosplay outfits, a chance to meet actors who’ve contributed to pop culture, companies selling exclusive merchandise and collectables and, of course, comic books.

Comic conventions have always been a pivotal event for aspiring authors and cartoonists to attend, offering multiple benefits for their publishing journey. Yet the past two years have been extremely difficult for all aspects of the community – especially the independent artists that rely on comic cons as a platform for their work and to help them gain an audience. That is finally changing as more comic conventions than ever are taking place for the first time since before the pandemic.

Comic cons are the traditional place to launch new authors/cartoonists and their work into a more public domain. They provide major benefits, not only to the independent authors and their book sales, but also to the publishing industry as well. Comic cons help provide awareness of the industry, help connect creators to other creators/publishers and provide psychological health benefits through interactions with fellow peers. The pandemic made it impossible for comic conventions to take place, meaning authors missed out on the chance to expand their audience and be able to live their dreams. The convention world is only just starting up again with in-person events happening for the first time without any restrictions, and creators are thriving once more by sharing their work.

Authors and cartoonists have always been invited to comic conventions. Ray Bradbury attended the very first convention in 1939, WorldCon, which still takes place to this day. He

also attended the first San Diego Comic Con, which is now the largest comic con in the world. Toronto Arts Festival, MCM Comic Con and FanExpo are some other internationally-acclaimed conventions that have gathered huge crowds throughout the years and have helped multiple authors launch their work into the world.

While there are now websites and apps such as Tapas and Webtoon that can promote upcoming cartoonists’ work, being able to display their work in places such as the Artist Alley at MCM London Comic Con, the biggest artist gathering in Europe, gives them the opportunity to discuss their work with other attendees and showcase their work to a much broader audience. It can give them an opportunity to make connections with a publishing house or continue to fund their self-publishing materials. Some creators might have already published one or two of their works but prefer to visit comic cons to promote their work rather than going through corporate streams.

It’s plain to see the impact the pandemic has had on the comic industry – just take this [article](#) from *Publishers Weekly* on the cancellation of the Sandiego Comic Con in 2020 as an example. Doubtless the restrictions all over the world forced creatives in this industry to come up with inventive ways to stay connected to

fans and try to gain some kind of revenue. Whilst web sales grew astronomically, some artists also turned to the selling of prints, t-shirts and even livestreaming the creation of their work on social media. As the world seems to open up further, the return of the convention must be a welcome buzz to fans and artists alike.

It should be said that though it may not feel like it, there is a difference between reading in print to reading digitally. It’s been suggested that digital reading promotes multitasking skills whilst reading in print helps develop deeper understanding, in turn helping the forming of new ideas. Comics are important to this concept as a potential combination of these two ways of reading, or a “bi-literacy,” through the simultaneous analysis of both

images and texts combined, as well as the layout of panels.

It’s worth noting the importance of comics and graphic novels in our culture today, a medium that has crossed into multiple art forms in society. Not only have comic-based stories garnered huge success in film and TV, the benefits of reading comics is also being reassessed in education. A [blog](#) from the Dublin City council has discussed that children who insisted they hated reading have expressed a passion for reading comic books. The combination of texts and images not only proves less intimidating but helps develop the valuable skill of inference from images, or “reading between the lines.” *American Born Chinese* has been cited as a successful example.

There was a time when comic books weren’t thought of as “real reading.” It’s incredibly exciting to not only see growing awareness that this is not the case, but the return of an event where they can be celebrated and perhaps inspire new fans too.

Keep an eye out this summer for upcoming conventions such as the London Comic Mart this June and the London Film and Comic Con (also known as YALC, Young Adult Literature Convention) and St Albans Comic-Con both this July. And if you’ve already got your summer plans booked, fear not because there are more events happening later this year.

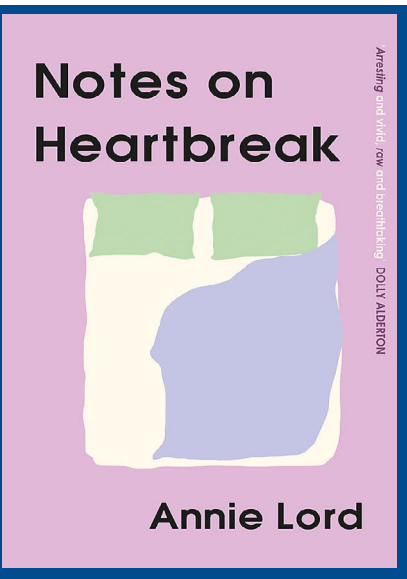




# What We're Anticipating: June and July Reads

BY MEG JONES, ALFIE KIMMINS, GEORGIA WELLS AND SARAH ERNESTINE

## Notes on Heartbreak by Annie Lord



- 23 June, Orion

Annie Lord, reeling from a broken heart, revisits the past – from the first time she fell in love, to the months that saw the slow deterioration of a bond that had been five years in the making. We feel Annie's pain, join her as she heals and cringe or laugh in recognition of our own experiences as Annie charts her attempts to move on, from disastrous rebound sex to sending ill-advised nudes, stalking her ex's new girlfriend on Instagram and the sharp humiliation of being ghosted.

This is a love story told in reverse, beginning with a breakup. It's dark, ferocious and vulnerable. It details the best and worst aspects of love: the euphoric and the agonising, the lovely and the unappealing. It is an unflinchingly honest reminder of the joy and pain of being in love that will speak to anyone who has ever nursed a broken heart.

## Lingering by Chris Coppel

- 28 June, Cranthorpe Milner

The woods appeared dark and foreboding. Dozens and dozens of slanted yellow eyes flickered open and stared back at the house from between the trees, where the darkness was blacker than black. Those eyes were not human. Paul and Christy are both looking forward to a fresh start when they buy Croft House.

Christy's abusive father is dying and she is eager to put the past behind her. However, the house has other plans. They quickly realise there is something in the house that is constantly striving to communicate with them. In their terror, they seek the assistance of a local

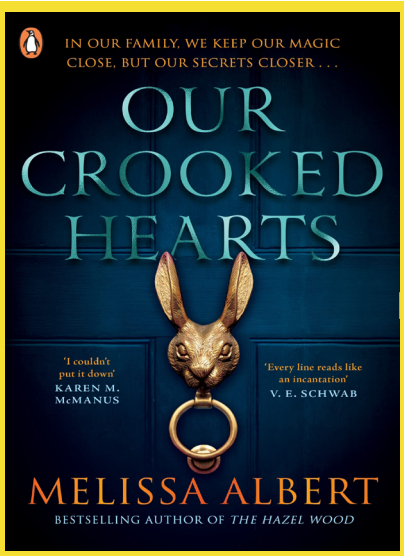
psychic to expel this entity and, in the process, unleash something far, far worse.

This terrifying new horror novel from Chris Coppel, author of *Luck, Liner, and Legacy*, is available 28 June in paperback.

## Our Crooked Hearts by Melissa Albert

- 30 June 2022, Penguin Random House Children's UK

At the beginning of summer, Ivy learns about the dark secrets that her mother, Dana, is hiding. An unnatural offering at her doorstep triggers a collection of unnerving events that threaten to uproot Ivy's fragmented childhood memories.



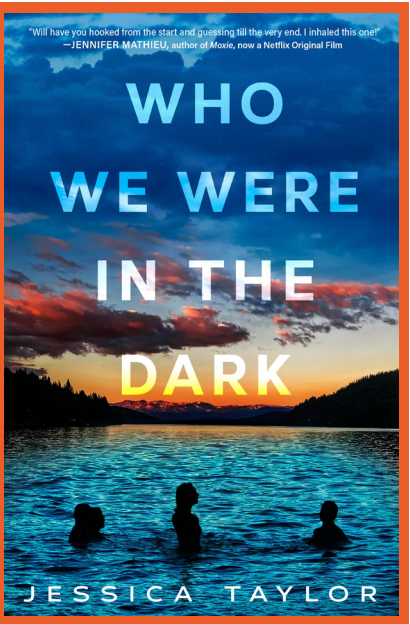
Dana's story begins at the age of sixteen, when her relations with the supernatural take an unexpected turn. She realises that the powers she is playing with are also beginning to play with her.

Years later, Ivy and Dana realise the dangers of playing with the unpredictable supernatural. And now, mother and daughter must face the consequences of allowing dark forces to enter their lives.

## Who We Were in the Dark by Jessica Taylor

- 5 July, Penguin Books

Nora fell in love with Grace at Donner Lake. Donner is a sanctuary, famous for its beauty and picturesque



landscape, but is also haunted by the stranded travellers whose need for survival drove them to commit unspeakable acts. Nora spends every break across the seasons by the lake with her brother, Wesley, their friend, Rand, and Grace. They, too, are travellers, leaving their lives behind for Donner Lake and each other.

They share their lives in turn, trading truths and dealing in lies and secrets. Captivated by each other, the four friends are inseparable and their bond is unbreakable. Until Grace goes missing. Nora must acknowledge the heartbreak and betrayal weaved throughout their time together and – with the help of Wesley and Rand – find the truth about the enigmatic girl who stole their hearts. Part thriller, part coming-of-age narrative, *Who We Were in the Dark* is an explosive exploration of identity and belonging.

## Thrust by Lidia Yuknavitch

- 7 July, Canongate Books

The bestselling author of *The Book of Joan* and *The Small Back of Children* is back with a new science-fiction novel to kick off the summer. *Thrust* follows the story of young Laisve, a motherless girl learning to

navigate her own powers and the oppressing politics of her fallen city, the Brook. Laisve can harness the power within significant objects and use it to travel through time.

When Laisve discovers a talisman that connects her with a variety of individuals from centuries past with different backgrounds, she navigates a complicated time web to travel back to the start of her corrupted country, fighting to solve the problems before they began. When the past and the future collide, will Laisve and her world be saved or lost to time? This novel is said to spark imagination and evoke questions in readers, following in line with the successes of Yuknavitch's previous titles.





# Recent Audiobook Releases to Pick Up

By PAULINE BIRD, EMILY DE VOGELE AND CAMERON PHILLIPS

For some, it seems like audiobooks have always been around. They often do not receive big press releases like their hardback counterparts, and their existence is something that we, as readers and listeners, can sometimes take for granted. This is exactly why we wanted to shine a light on audiobooks that have been recently released, perhaps some you may have overlooked or missed.

## Emily's pick

I've discussed my love of history numerous times before. And while certain historical non-fiction pieces can be challenging to read, or even listen to, some are the complete opposite. Hence my pick for this issue. *The Facemaker* by Lindsey Fitzharris tells the story of Harold Gillies, often regarded as the father of modern plastic surgery.

After the First World War, soldiers returned home disfigured and broken. Gillies set up the first 'plastic surgery' hospital (although it wasn't known as that back then). Fitzharris does

an incredible job of making this story accessible to the average listener, you don't need a medical degree to understand the subject and themes. We learn about the trials and tribulations of both the medical staff and the soldiers, and what they all faced in order to rebuild lives and confidence in post-war society.

Fitzharris' clear passion for this subject in history is obvious through the careful research it required to tell these stories. The narrator, Daniel Gillies, brings to life the pioneering actions of the surgeon, giving this speechless historic figure a voice. Gillies' narration is part of what makes this audiobook such an exciting listen; his voice keeps the story alive. Coming in at a short and sweet eight hours, this is perfect for a weekend listen or even an afternoon, depending on how brave you are!

## Cameron's pick

My pick this week is Pete Doherty's *A Likely Lad*, an audible memoir from Pete Doherty, guitarist and

lead co-songwriter of the era defining English rock band, *The Libertines*. Let's get one thing out the way; addiction in any form should not be romanticised. It is destructive, and leads to the harm of the user and their loved ones, sometimes more than the user themselves. Unfortunately, Pete Doherty's life and career has been defined by his addictions, which have overshadowed his immense talent as a singer-songwriter, who produced, with Carl Barat, some of the very best of British music.

In this memoir, narrated by Ben Elliot, Pete takes us on a candid journey of triumphs and tribulations. From his relationship with class A drugs to his famous relationship with friend and fellow band member Carl Barat, Pete never shies away from the terrible lows he sank to. It's witty, painfully reflective but so defiant. Much like his musical and literary influences, you can tell from Pete's writing that he is a fan of poetry, alongside French and English literature, which I absolutely love. It's very subtle, but it's there.

In another life, Pete could have ended up in *The 27 Club*, but fortunately for him and his fans, he survived it and lives to tell his tale. Pete's legacy is a tale of being Britain's 'last great rockstar,' but this is more a legacy of his place in the British music canon, one that is highly deserved.

## Pauline's pick

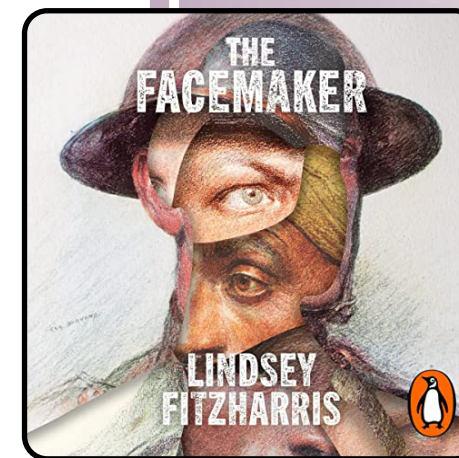
Many adults, when choosing a book for a child, often select a favourite from their own childhood. Perhaps this is why books by Roald Dahl remain bestsellers today, despite being written in the middle of last century. But with accusations mounting that much of his work is sexist, ableist and racist, is there a place for these childhood classics in the repertoire of recommended books for the 21st century child?

After listening to the new audiobook interpretation of my favourite Roald Dahl story, *The Witches*, I would argue that this book has stood the test of time and would most definitely recommend this to young listeners. It is terrifying and exciting, and had me hooked from the beginning.

Lolly Adefope's *Grand High Witch* is deliciously horrid and is sure to both delight and repulse in equal measures.

I believe that banning books is never the answer, but adults should have a conversation with children if they find that certain representations in the texts need to be explored further. For example, in *The Witches*, I reassured my children that they should not be scared of people who are visually different. The witches in this version are represented as non-human, however intertextuality might mean that children believe the witches to be human females, so this clarification with a trusted adult is important.

Listening to stories such as *The Witches* can help ignite a love of storytelling for a whole new generation of children. That, I believe, is wonderful and the power of books should never be underestimated.





# Latest Acquisitions and Adaptations

BY GEORGIE CUTLER AND EVA LEE



### Acquisitions News

#### Tor signs Olivie Blake's *Alone With You in the Ether*

TikTok catapulted the success of Olivie Blake's self-published novel, *The Atlas Six*, inspiring a publishing bidding war that Tor ultimately won. *The Atlas Six* has gone on to being developed by Amazon and Brightstar as a TV series. Tor has extended their collaboration with Blake, as they have just acquired the rights for *Alone With You in the Ether* in the UK and the Commonwealth. This is another novel that was originally self-published by Blake and has had success on BookTok. Tor UK and US

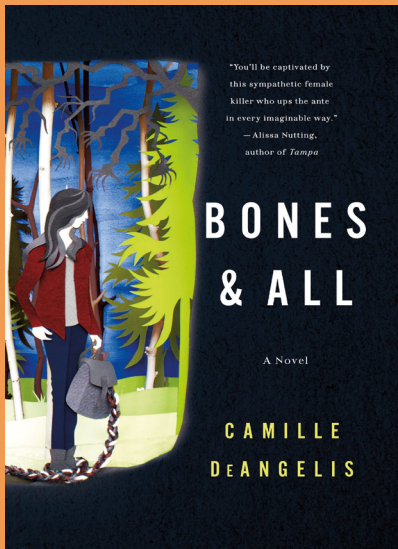


Photo Credit: Olivie Blake

are set to release updated versions later this year. This deal was completed by the Publishing Director of Tor UK, Bella Pagan, who acquired the rights from the Tor division of Macmillan US's Chris Scheina.

#### Bloomsbury lands *The War Came to Us* from Christopher Miller

Journalist and writer Christopher Miller has struck a deal with Bloomsbury Continuum, as they have acquired *The War Came to Us: Life and Death in Ukraine*. English language rights were secured by Tomasz Hoskins from David Patterson at Stuart Krichevsky Agency.



Miller shares his extensive knowledge on Ukraine and Eastern Europe with his appearances on podcasts and television programmes from the BBC to CNN. The book is described as a powerful story of the country's history, revolution and war. He mentions "drawing intimate portraits of people & events shaping the nation & forging a new Ukrainian identity." ([Twitter](#)) Bloomsbury Continuum US and the UK is set to publish the book in June 2023.

#### From Book To Screen: What to Watch?

#### *The Summer I Turned Pretty* on Amazon Prime Video

Following the success of Jenny Han's *To All the Boys* series on Netflix, Amazon Prime is set to release an adaptation of her earlier 2009 young adult book. Based on the novel of the same name, *The Summer I Turned Pretty* follows Isabel, a fifteen-year-old trying to balance family, love and self-growth over the course of a summer spent at a beach house. The series is co-created by Han and Gabrielle Stanton and stars Lola Tung, Jackie Chung, Christopher Briney and Gavin Casalegno. This feel-good summer romance is set to be released as a seven-part series. You can stream *The Summer I Turned Pretty* on Amazon Prime from 17 June.

#### MGM picks up romantic horror *Bones and All*

Based on the novel of the same name by Camille DeAngelis, the upcoming romantic horror film adaptation is set to be directed by Luca Guadagnino. The American-Italian story is about Maren, a young woman with cannibalistic tendencies living on the edge of society. It is set to star Timothée Chalamet and Taylor Russell as the leading roles of the film. The film will be released by United Artists Releasing in the US and Vision Distribution in Italy. Filming has wrapped up and the film is expected to be released in the second half of 2022 or early 2023.

### In the works

#### Cast reveal for *Red, White and Royal Blue*

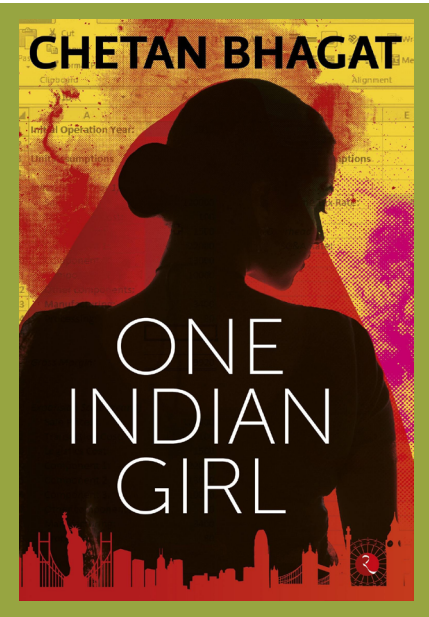
The protagonists for the adaptation of Casey McQuiston's bestselling romance novel have been cast. Taylor Zakhar Perez and Nicholas Galitzine have been cast as Alex Claremont-Diaz and Prince Henry respectively. The novel was originally published in 2019 and the film rights were bought by Amazon Studios shortly after its release.

The plot follows the relationship between Alex, the first son of the US President, and Henry, a British Prince, as they try to keep their blossoming romance from the global press. Uma Thurman is also set to join the cast as Ellen Claremont, who is Alex's mother and POTUS. Matthew López has been attached to the project as a writer and director of the film. The adaptation is currently in early production and is set to be released by Amazon Prime.

#### Sony Pictures acquires *One Indian Girl*

Sony Pictures International have acquired film rights to novelist Chetan Bhagat's *One Indian Girl*, which was released back in 2016. The production for the film is set to be developed this year with no further information

on casting or directors so far. It follows the story of Radhika Mehta, an intelligent and successful woman who works at an investment bank but struggles to find love. With the project in the early stages of development, more information is expected to be released in the upcoming months.





# Highlights in the Charts

## *Our Wives Under The Sea* by Julia Armfield

### Review by Arabella Petts

Following on from her debut collection of short stories, Armfield brings us another incredible queer gothic tale in the form of her first novel.

When Leah returns home after a mission in the deep-sea, it is clear to her wife Miri, that she is not the same. Whatever happened in their vessel, Leah has brought a part of it back with her into their home and soon Miri realises that their old life might be gone forever.

After reading *Salt Slow*, Armfield's collection of short stories, I was excited to see how her writing would translate to a novel and it couldn't have worked any better. The chapters are split between Miri and Leah's perspectives, covering Leah's trip and afterwards, so we get to read first-hand what is happening to her in the ocean and see the effects of love, loss and grief on both women. I was intrigued by both sides of the story and throughout the book was eagerly anticipating the next chapter.

Armfield has a miraculous way of writing about issues like grief in a twisted yet beautiful way, and reading it is a wonderful experience.

## *The Dictionary of Lost Words* by Pip Williams

### Review by Jenna Tomlinson

Imagine spending forty years compiling the first two volumes of the updated version of Samuel Johnson's *English Dictionary* to be told you had forgotten a word? That is exactly what happened in 1901 to the men compiling the new *Oxford English Dictionary* and it forms the basis of Williams' charming novel *The Dictionary of Lost Words*.

Told through the fictional character Esme, the daughter of one of the men working in the Scriptorium (a shed where the men sift through words and their uses supplied on slips of paper by all walks of society) who spends her days on the floor of the "Scrippy." In the novel, this word is missed because she keeps the slip when it falls to the floor from the desk the men are working

at. As more paper and words are dropped to the floor, Esme begins to add to her collection. Her words have a link – many are female focused – and Esme uses these and others she has learned, to create her own manuscript: *Women's Words and Their Meanings*.

Williams has said that her novel began as two simple questions: do words have different meanings to men and women? If so, have we lost something in the process of defining them? This is evident in the book. It is no surprise that many of the words or some of their definitions were overlooked or dismissed by the group of men working on the dictionary.

The novel is set during a time where women, although beginning to find their voices and become more prominent in society, were still second class for the most part. For many of the words, we were creating our own meanings and symbolism. A key example of this is the word "sister," defined as "a female sibling" by the men, but Esme learns from the Suffragettes that it can mean "comrades."

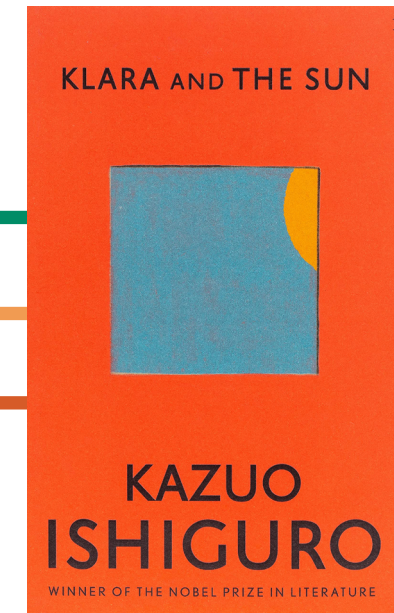


I found myself enthralled in Esme's journey and education of language. Williams has brought an interesting historical anomaly to light in an engaging and creative way, without losing the social and political message at its core.

## *Klara And The Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro

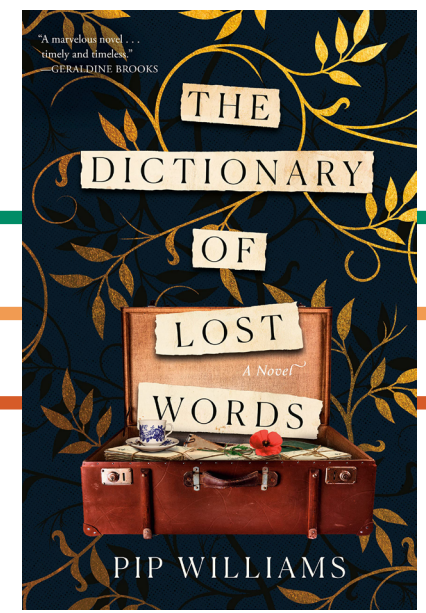
### Review by Madeleine Lily

*Klara And The Sun* is a brilliantly written, unique point of view of the world offered from the perspective of a robot who slowly learns about humans, emotions and the dark reality of the home she has been brought into.



The story follows Klara, an artificial friend (AF) whose first experience of life is living in a store advertised to potential children and their parents to become friends with. Here, she starts to learn all she can from life outside the window and begins to pick up the intricate details of human emotion. Eventually, a sickly child, Josie, chooses her and Klara is taken to the new environment of Josie's home. From their first moments of interaction, Josie openly admits there is something dark about her home life, creating mystery and a compelling read.

Klara learns more about the world and her new home with the housekeeper, Josie and her mother. We read the book exclusively from Klara's perspective, which



is a unique approach but confusing at times. Klara sees things in boxes and squares which was a hard concept to understand at first. However, this point of view allows the reader to learn about the world with Klara. We only learn as much as Klara sees but readers have the advantage of being able to predict the plot twist before it happens due to a trail of hints left from her and Josie's first interaction.

There are few characters in this book which helps readers get to know certain characters intricately. The character of Rick was a particular favourite as he allows readers to understand the advanced world the narrative takes place in. His interactions with Josie and Klara's interpretation of them were well written.



# Books in Translation: Ukraine

BY NIINA BAILEY, TOBY SMOLLET AND KATE WILLIAMS

On 28 June each year, Ukraine celebrates Constitution Day. This year will inevitably be different from usual as the Russian invasion continues; however, we wanted to mark the occasion and show our support by reviewing three books by Ukrainian authors. They are very different from each other, but each showcases what Ukraine has to offer. We hope you find some new books to enjoy.

***Death and the Penguin* by Andrey Kurkov. Translated by George Bird. Published by Vintage in 2001**

*Death and the Penguin* follows an aspiring writer, Viktor Alekseyevich Zolotaryov, in post-Soviet Kyiv. The novel starts with Viktor getting a job as an obituary writer for a local newspaper. Unusually, the subjects of his obituaries are still alive when he writes them, and he is tasked with looking for high-profile people to write about. Viktor is a very lonely man and at the beginning of the novel his only friend is his pet penguin Misha, hence the name.

During the novel, Viktor's social circle expands, and strange things start happening because of his job. He soon realises he is tangled up in something nefarious which is more than he can handle.

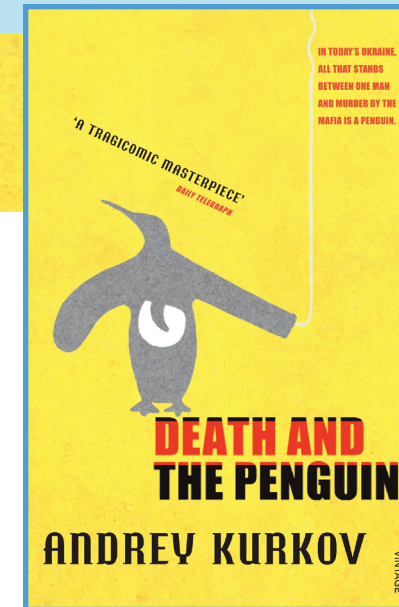
The strongest aspect of the novel is the relationship between Viktor and Misha. It is clear to see how much Viktor cares about the penguin and even when other people enter his life, his priority is still Misha. In the end, he would do anything for his penguin. The novel has surrealist elements, best represented by the presence of Misha. The contrast between the death in the novel and Viktor's life with his penguin, which is often quite mundane, is very well crafted and makes for an interesting read.

*Death and the Penguin* was originally published in 1996 in Russian, despite Kurkov being Ukrainian. It has since become Kurkov's most popular work and it has been translated into over thirty languages. It has a sequel, *Penguin Lost*.

***Your Ad Could Go Here: Stories* by Oksana Zabuzhko. Translated by Amazon Crossing in 2020**

This short story collection contains a wide variety of different stories, which all tie back to the central theme of female relationships. They mostly narrate mundane, everyday situations; Zabuzhko writes about losing a pair of gloves, tennis lessons and going to watch an opera performance. Despite this, the writer uses these simple plotlines to comment on wider issues relating to Ukrainian politics, history and feminism.

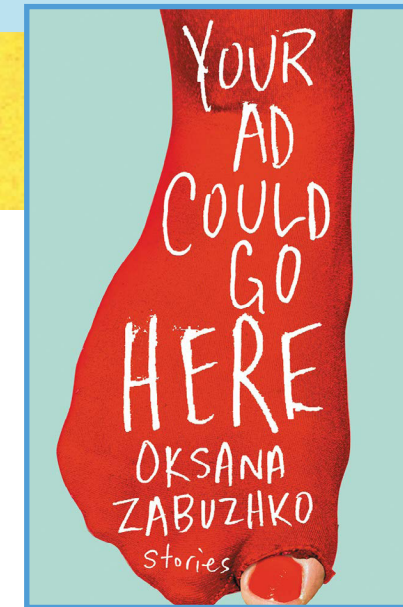
When reading the stories, we get the sense that we are accessing the author's inner thoughts and feelings. Her prose is full of meandering observations, and she uses long sentences spanning pages. While this creates intimacy between writer and reader, it can also be quite difficult to follow her train of thought. Her style of writing certainly took me some time to get used to (I would recommend starting with the shorter stories such as



'The Tennis Instructor' and 'Your Ad Could Go Here'), but if you are willing to put in the work, you will be met by beautifully written and thought-provoking stories that read almost like fairy tales. This rambling style is also interesting because, as stated in [Kirkus Reviews](#), "She takes up space [...]" and allows her mostly female protagonists to do the same." Thus, the writer is making a fundamentally feminist choice by allowing both her own and her female protagonists' thoughts and feelings to be heard.

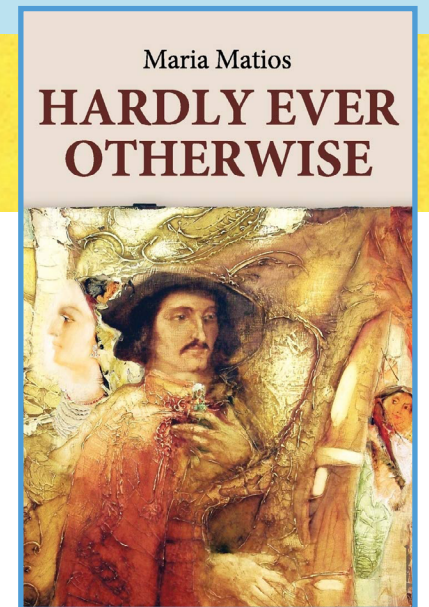
***Hardly Ever Otherwise* by Maria Matios. Translated by Yuri Tkacz. Published by Glagoslav Publications in 2012**

I rarely enjoy historical fiction. The way that old contexts, stories, people



are repurposed to tell a contemporary story often feels ill-fitting, the narrative link somewhat forced. *Hardly Ever Otherwise* does not suffer from this at all. Present and past fit seamlessly, without the historical context ever being overshadowed or ignored.

Based in a small village in the Carpathian Mountains in Ukraine, towards the end of the Austro-Hungarian empire, it follows the (often tragic) lives of the villagers. These lives are filled with secrets and fatal flaws that inexorably draw the characters towards each other, into one massive collision at the base of the mountains. At the climax come the backstories for our cast – we end with the past. Much of the conflict can be easily linked to modern



dilemmas: the ownership of land, brotherhood and betrayal (and revenge), the brutal truth of what is required to stay alive.

The villagers are not immediately likeable – the novel opens with Kyrylo, a wealthy farmer, suggesting that the family look to aid his daughter-in-law, Dotsia, with her pregnancy. His wife is unamused, bemoaning the fact that she never received such help during her difficulties with pregnancy. If the lack of sympathy towards her daughter-in-law seems callous, so too does Kyrylo's misogyny ("Stop nattering and contradicting me, woman!") and yet by the end of the book, the past makes sympathy for the characters easy. It is not offered as a justification, simply an explanation: we are where we are now because of who we were in the past.



# An Interview with Podcast Founder: Big Kids Book Club

BY ANNABELLA COSTANTINO, MICHAELA O'CALLAGHAN AND LAUREN GANTT

If you are passionate about children's books and have a fondness for podcasts, then we absolutely recommend the [Big Kids Book Club](#)! Set up by Marcus Henson and Emma Keane, this is perfect for publishing hopefuls looking to immerse themselves in the world of children's literature – featuring excellent author interviews and latest book releases. We are overjoyed that we had the chance to chat with Marcus:

## What is the story behind the *Big Kids Book Club*?

"With the magic of flashbacks, we're transported to Summer 2020. A time of madness, uncertainty and furlough. I was bored and looking for something to do, while Emma was finding herself without a job. It was a pretty grim time and we were both fed up. Needless to say, we needed a distraction! With our shared love of young adult and middle-grade books, we got on a Zoom call and started to talk... it snowballed from there."



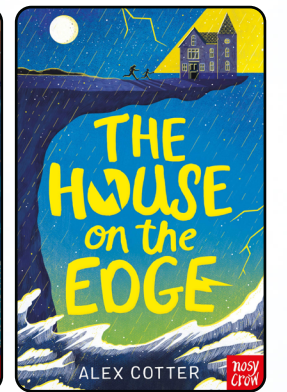
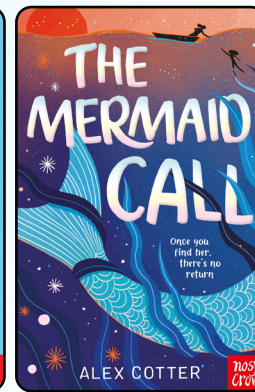
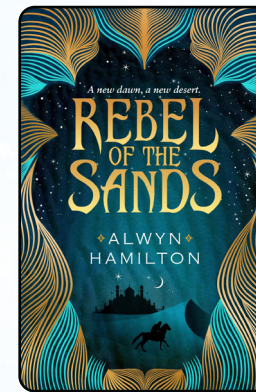
## Do you have a favourite episode of the podcast?

"Ooooh, that's a good one. There's over 130 episodes to choose from and many authors have been a blast to chat to. One thing that the podcast has shown us is just how amazing and passionate the publishing industry is: especially those working within kidlit. That being said, we got a chance to do something super special when we did a joint interview with [Alwyn Hamilton](#). It's time for another flashback: it's 2017, and Emma and I are meeting for the first time at the University of

Surrey. Don't ask me how it happened, but we got to talking about books and that's when Emma said, 'You have to read [Rebel of the Sands](#),' promptly buying me my own copy to read. I loved it, so it became the book that kickstarted our friendship."

## What children's books are you excited about at the moment?

"Not going to lie, I'm feeling super mysterious at the moment! I have definitely read some good thrillers and mystery novels recently. Shout out to [Gina Blaxill](#)'s [You Can Trust Me](#), published by [Scholastic](#), and my current read, [Fiona Longmuir](#)'s [Looking For Emily](#), published by [Nosy Crow](#). Added to this, I've recently received a proof copy of [Alex Cotter](#)'s [The Mermaid Call](#) – and I simply devoured Alex's middle-grade debut thriller, [The House On The Edge](#), so I can't wait for more spooky, mystery vibes. While many might be looking for light-hearted summer reads, I'm wanting all of the weird and wonderful stories that put me on the edge of my seat."



## What are your future plans for the podcast?

"We are super excited to say that we have some pretty big stuff brewing. Emma and I are taking a big step into making the podcast something bigger and better for all the lovely listeners who tune in each week. By that I mean we're starting a Patreon, so that we can elevate the platform by investing back into the show. We're going to be creating some exclusive season-based content for our Patreons, with Autumn (September–December), Winter (January–April) and Summer (May–August) episodes. Our plan is to do some pre-launch promotion over this summer with Autumn being our Season 1, where we'll be looking at the world 'Behind the Book.' We'll be speaking to industry representatives, publishing professionals and other bookish adjacent interests that cover taking a book from agent to acquisitions, through the publishing process and finally out on the bookshelves. It's very exciting here at *Big Kids HQ*!"

## How do you work with the publishing industry?

"We work with really amazing publishers here in the UK. We tackle middle-grade and young adult fiction and non-fiction, so we catch a good slice of the market. Initially, with the few half a dozen authors that came onto the show, I was simply sending Twitter DMs and begging them to appear on our podcast – such was our humble origins. But as we grew and learnt more, we reached out directly to publishers to set us up with their latest titles and authors. I should say a big shout out to Beth over at [Faber Children's](#), who was the first publisher who saw our little podcast and agreed to help us out! Since then, as more publishers work with us, it's easier to reach out. Currently we work with about a dozen publishers and freelance book publicists, who keep us fully stocked with new releases and fantastic authors to talk to."

## Have you got any tips for hopefuls looking to learn more about kidlit?

"Be bold and send that email! Maybe you're starting a book blog, want to talk to an author, or you're looking to get into a publishing profession. You'll be surprised how far you can get by being polite, enthusiastic and friendly. Feel free to [reach out to us](#) – we love to connect with other bookish people and are always open to more interviews and blogs."

Thank you, Marcus, for chatting with us about how you turned your passion for kidlit into an excellent resource for kidlit lovers!



# Royal Reads to Start This Summer

BY BECCY FISH, JULIETTE TULLOCH AND AMY EVANS

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With the recent celebrations of the Platinum Jubilee, our patriotic enthusiasm has reached an all-time high. From Kings and Queens to castles and crowns, in this issue we shall explore a few of the many books featuring royalty.

## *Red, White & Royal Blue* by Casey McQuiston

*Red, White & Royal Blue* is an LGBTQIA+ novel following Alex Claremont-Diaz, the son of the President of the United States, and his romance with the British Prince, Henry. The two pretend to be friends to prevent a huge media wave that would impair Alex's mother's campaign for the 2020 election. This cover is quite minimalistic with the title stretched to dominate the space; the colours of the typography match the colours of both US and British flags and provide associations with royalty and diplomacy. On either side of the text, our main characters Alex and Henry are also introduced, passing side glances to indicate the tension between them.



## *The Queen's Rising* by Rebecca Ross

Rebecca Ross's debut *The Queen's Rising* mixes fantasy and self-discovery in protagonist Brienna who is desperate to find her passion. With choices between art, music, wit, dramatics and knowledge, Brienna must choose and master one in order to find a patron. However, alongside Brienna's struggle, there is also the plot to overthrow the King of the rival kingdom in order to

restore the rightful Queen. The obvious decoration of the crown that sits at the top, the swirling typography and embellishments of gold on this cover make it easy to identify the book's fantastical and historical genre. Along with the deep blues in the colour palette, the element of mystery and darkness is also prevalent.

## *Kaikeyi* by Vaishnavi Patel

Vaishnavi Patel's debut is a powerful retelling of the Indian epic poem, the Ramayana, and its infamous Queen Kaikeyi. As the only daughter of the kingdom of Kekaya, she undergoes a transformation into warrior, diplomat and a most-favoured queen. Once her father banishes her mother, she unearths the magic from the ancient texts her mother used to read to her. The cover design exemplifies the Queen's Indian head jewellery, a matha patti and the regal gold that solidifies her power and presence. Lisa Pompilio from Orbit designed the cover and you can see more of her work [here](#).



## *The Dark Star Trilogy* by Marlon James

Booker Prize winner Marlon James is back this year with the second instalment in *The Dark Star Trilogy*, after the success of his first novel *Black Leopard, Red Wolf*. Recently published in March, *Moon Witch, Spider King* continues the story of the 177-year-old witch Sogolon, a lost child and a regal chancellor in a mythic world. This sequel traces the same events but is instead narrated through mainly the eyes of Sogolon, drawing on African mythology and James' rashomon technique. The cover design's merging of eyes, faces and nature demonstrates that these narratives can be intentionally misleading and draw on the fantastical.

## *The Cruel Prince* by Holly Black

*The Cruel Prince* is the first book in Holly Black's popular *The Folk of the Air* series. In the first book, we meet main character Jude, a human girl living in the world of faeries – including the titular “cruel prince” Cardan. While the cover doesn't give too much away, its relatively simple design is quite appealing and definitely shows that it is going to be a YA fantasy novel. The gold of the crown stands out against the white background and the branches in the background give some extra detail as well as tying in with the links between faeries and nature. However, the front cover design by itself does almost make it seem like the prince will be the protagonist of the book.



## *Red Queen* by Victoria Aveyard

*Red Queen* is the first entry in Victoria Aveyard's young adult fantasy series, set in a world where people are either Silvers or Reds, and the Silvers have all the power. The bold cover for this book incorporates both these colours, with the upturned silver crown covered in red blood capturing some of the power dynamics and conflicts at play within this book. Though the cover is definitely eye-catching, the design is solely focused on the crown, with no background images to support it. The minimal design does work visually, but it also means this cover has little to make it stand out within the trend in YA books for covers that centre around crown imagery.



# Country Spotlight: Irish Classics

By MEGAN POWELL, MICHAEL CALDER AND HANNAH SPRUCE

With the summer holidays quickly approaching, the classics team have decided to take a literary trip to Ireland to bring to light some Irish classics that you should read. This country's spotlight is full of inspiration and remarkable writers who have carved their name as some of the most influential and renowned authors in classic literature. From Wilde\*, to Joyce, to Heaney, these authors have become staples when reading classic literature. This issue explores more of our favourite Irish authors and poets to grow your global bookshelf.

\*Check out our earlier issue (issue twelve) which was fully devoted to Wilde for more on him.

## Dubliners by James Joyce



Photo: © Hulton-Deutsch Collection

This Irish classic was first published in 1914, at a time when Irish nationalism was increasing and conflicting ideas were arising around the crisis of Irish identity. *Dubliners* reflects these cultural influences and challenges in the structure of fifteen short stories. Joyce writes numerous characters, all with varying plots to fully depict Dublin during this pivotal time in Ireland's history. The rise of cultural attitudes and behaviours is masterfully explored through this short story structure, allowing Joyce to fully encompass Irish society.

This collection of short stories boldly, and truthfully, explores the harsh realities many Irish people faced throughout this period of cultural unrest. The plots mostly follow the lives of the middle-class society, each exquisitely executing imperative themes of social restriction through the centre of the country's political and industrial rebellion. It is hard to select a standout story within this collection as they all equally stand as remarkable pieces of literature. *Dubliners* is a fantastic introduction to Joyce and will certainly establish your desire to read more of his work.

## Poetry by W.B Yeats

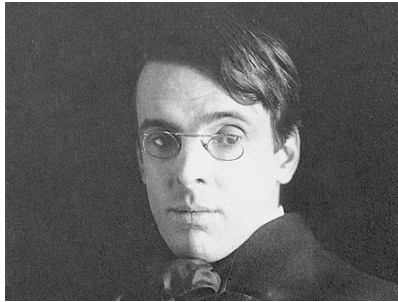


Photo: Alice Boughton

Ireland is at the heart of the poetry of W.B Yeats and his work helped to establish Irish literature as something distinct and valuable. In 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree' the speaker yearns for the peaceful natural beauty of the Irish landscape which continues to inspire and ground them. Yeats writes of Ireland in an evocative and mystical manner, he establishes its beauty through his rich and nostalgic imagery that are inspired by his own experiences, which many others also recognise as familiar and comforting. Despite this tranquillity, in 'Prayer for my Daughter,' the stability of Ireland is threatened due to the societal shifts and uncertainties which paint a much bleaker portrait for the next generation.

Yeats's oeuvre was integral to the Irish literary revival and there is a reverence in the

way he explores the heritage of the country. There is still a strong attachment to his poetry as it represents a celebration of the culture which had been suppressed for so many years.

## Digging by Seamus Heaney

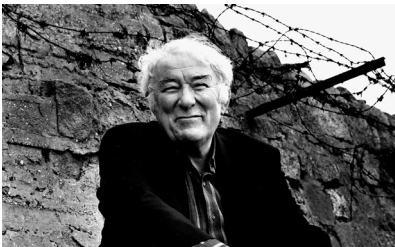


Photo: Eamonn McCabe/The Guardian

Within Seamus Heaney's earliest poetry collection, *Death of a Naturalist* (1966), the Nobel Prize-winning Irishman deliberated heavily upon the topic of identity. He considered the split nationalist identity that haunted Ireland, religious dissonance that divided his homeland and an internalised childhood disconnection with both his ancestry and patriarchal figures.

As the opening poem of this collection, 'Digging' encapsulates these notions of a disenfranchised identity during youth and uncovers the bridges Heaney built to overcome uncertainty, plying his trade as successfully as his ancestors did their own.

However, the poem opens with despondency, depicting the traditional skill of his forefathers and the conflict with his own passions. Heaney cannot align the two – neither regarding their physical intensity, or impressiveness. Within the poem's following stanzas, Heaney depicts growing up in rural Derry and the rapturous differences between himself and his lineage – occupation, academia, ideology – via representation and admiration for his father.

In a relatable, accessible poem about the development and complexity of the individual journey, Heaney translates childhood trauma, fear, anxiety and eventual acceptance into recognisable experience.

## Belfast Confetti by Ciaran Carson

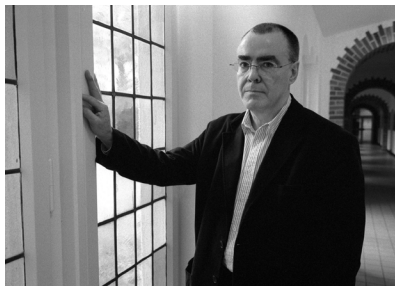


Photo: Michael Oreal

Written as a depiction of decisively tumultuous periods within Irish history, Ciaran Carson's most recognised poem, 'Belfast

*Confetti'* (1987), captures the devastation, confusion and dissociation which accompany an explosion within Belfast City centre.

The poem begins with chaos and minimal context, brilliantly depicting the immediate aftermath of a situation which can barely be comprehended without experience. However, with ingenious utility of verbalised punctuation, Carson expresses the panic and volatility of the violent situation within a medium which feels almost tangible, drawing comparison between our everyday understanding of the literary devices and the extremely unfamiliar nature of the conflict – everyone understands the impact of an exclamation mark with the viscerality of an explosion.

Yet, Carson not only draws the reader into the conflict but embeds conflict within the speaker. The speaker's transition between disjointed thoughts and interwoven analogy; familiarity with the landscape, but inaccessibility; and the ultimate lack of direction imbues a sense of dysfunction brought about by experiencing such a heinous act and captures the reader within the unrecognised, dangerous and intense persona.

# Job Opportunities

BY LEAH BIRD AND TASNEEM HAFIZ



## Editorial Assistant – Picture Books & Non- Fiction, HarperCollins Publishers

**Closing Date:** 23 June

**Salary:** £25,000

**Location:** London

A fantastic, entry-level opportunity has arisen for an Editorial Assistant to join HarperCollins' Farshore to support the busy Picture Book and Non-Fiction Team, publishing award-winning and bestselling books.

You will be supporting the team in editorial and administrative tasks, including proofreading, taking meeting notes, updating the publishing programme and liaising with other key departments, including production, sales, marketing, PR and publishing operations. You will also be building knowledge of the children's and wider book market, staying up to date with trends and competitor titles, undertaking market research as required, and alerting the team to possible new opportunities. Your responsibilities will also include liaising with authors,

agents and freelancers on individual projects, writing copy, completing advance information sheets and inputting and managing metadata.

The ideal candidate will be friendly, efficient and self-starting. You will fully immerse yourself in the world of children's books and help create profitable titles that contribute to their market growth and uphold the Division's mission to "make every child a proud reader." You will ideally be extremely organised and efficient, have an ability to meet deadlines and have a precise eye for detail. You will also need confident communication skills and strong copywriting and proofreading skills.

For more information and to apply, click [here](#).



DEBORAH ROGERS  
FOUNDATION

*Literary Foundation & Writers Award*

## Internships/ Apprenticeships

### The DRF David Miller Internship Programme, Deborah Rogers Foundation

**Closing Date:** 26 June

**Salary:** £2,400

**Location:** London

The Deborah Rogers Foundation (DRF) is looking for two interns to complete six-week internships and who will be introduced to the world of rights and agenting.

Those who are successful will have the opportunity to work with companies such as Penguin Random House and Faber. You will be given an entry level introduction to rights and agenting, providing a full understanding of rights professionals within the wider industry. You will have first-hand experience and intensive training to give you a significant steppingstone to future employment. You will also be involved with the Frankfurt Book Fair and given mentoring and guidance throughout your placement.

The ideal candidate will have a keen interest in publishing, in particular rights and agenting. You will be eager to learn, have good time management skills and be highly organised. This opportunity is particularly aimed at individuals from a group that is underrepresented in the creative industries. To apply, click [here](#).



## Editorial Assistant Apprentice, Alain Charles Publishing

**Closing Date:** 23 June

**Salary:** £18,000

**Location:** London

Alain Charles Publishing is looking for an enthusiastic publishing assistant apprentice to join its editorial team. The role will include composing online news stories and writing up press releases covering a range of industry sectors across the Middle East and Africa.

Key responsibilities include proofreading and editing copy when necessary; writing original content; attending conferences, exhibitions

and events; content and magazine production; coordinating and supporting departments such as the design, production, editorial and sales teams.

The ideal candidate will have exceptional communication skills (written and spoken) as well as good attention to detail. The role is also looking for someone who is organised and self-motivated. You will also have an understanding of social media and digital developments and be engaged in current affairs.

For more information about this apprentice, please click [here](#).



## Publishing Operations Apprentice, Quarto Publishing

**Closing Date:** 30 June

**Salary:** £17,290

**Location:** London

An exciting opportunity has arisen for an entry-level apprenticeship position at Quarto Publishing. This job

is the perfect opportunity for someone who wants to take their first step into publishing and loves children's books.

The successful candidate will provide administrative assistance to a team of editors and designers. Other key responsibilities of the role include management of administrative systems such as: working with the five trade imprints to facilitate working practices and processes that help the teams deliver books on schedule and within budget; administer the sending out and filing of contracts; managing the processing and filing of invoices and much more. There will also be opportunities to carry out ad-hoc duties such as market research, writing meeting minutes and liaising with other departments, external project managers and freelancers.

The ideal candidate should be willing to show initiative and be proactive. You will have good written communication skills and show professionalism whilst interacting with various teams. A good team member and being able to work independently is a must.

For more information about this apprentice, please click [here](#).



# Indie Spotlight: Mercier Press

BY CHARLOTTE BONNER AND AMY TIGHE

The protection and preservation of history and culture is an important worldwide issue that is often the focus of stories following slights and injustices against different cultures. Promoting the voices of local authors and speaking out about local histories is an incredible way to help preserve our heritage.

One incredible independent publishing house that actively seeks to promote and publish authors with this very philosophy in mind is Mercier Press. As the oldest independent publishing house in Ireland, Mercier Press itself is just as much a part of the history they publish. Their remarkable work has made a massive impact in the support of Irish authors, readers and scholars, as well as educating a worldwide audience on Irish history and culture. They have a focus on historical non-fiction, biography, and lifestyle of Irish voices, whilst also publishing children's, sports, political and fiction books.

Set up in 1944 by husband and wife Seán and Mary Feehan, Mercier began by publishing religious texts, which is reflected by the press being named after a Belgian cardinal. However, from the beginning, they chose to publish books that challenged conventional Catholic beliefs, and encouraged their readers to question what they had been told. During a long



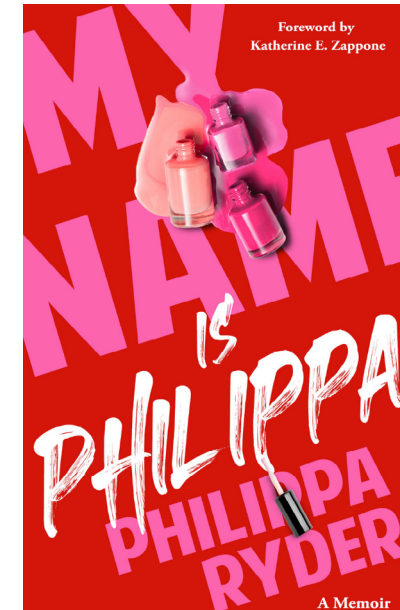
period where the influence of the Catholic Church did more harm than good in many parts of Ireland, Mercier Press published thought-provoking books that helped shape and develop alternative ways of thinking in Ireland.

Indeed, this influence was felt internationally, as Seán Feehan was the first Irish publisher to attend the Frankfurt Book Fair, setting a Mercier tradition which remains unbroken since 1955 (international pandemics notwithstanding). On his first attendance, eager readers were disappointed to not find a range of Irish books at his stand. Mercier decided to address this issue and thus began a period of growth in which they took a leap of faith and began publishing Irish books depicting Irish culture without flattery or the stage Irishry that was popular at the time.

Mercier continued to push the limits of possibility by publishing books such as *The Tailor and Ansty*, a biography by Irish writer Eric Cross that depicts the life of tailor and seanchaí (storyteller) Timothy Buckley, which was banned for its depiction of sexual relations and premarital cohabitation, alongside the hilarious *Sex Instructions for Farmers*, which disciplines against bum-pinching and advises monthly sock-changing in order to find a wife.

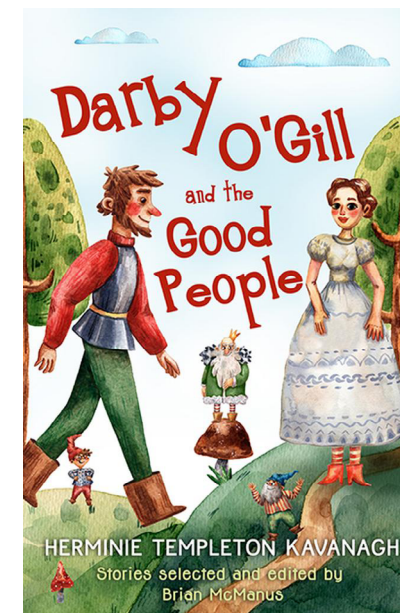
A great friendship between the Feehans and John B Keane was formed when Mercier began publishing the Irish writer's work. Mercier was instrumental in Keane becoming known as one of Ireland's most forthright and controversial playwrights, writing with brutal honesty of the trials of rural Ireland. Through the decades that followed, Mercier continued to make waves by publishing the radical *Irish Marriage How Are You!* by Nuala Fennell, a feminist activist who fought in the 70s for women's rights within marriage, as well as making room for humour, such as the *Kerryman Jokes*, *101 Reasons Why Ireland Is Better Than England* and *Thanks, Penneys*, the latter celebrating the Irish love affair with Primark clothes.

An upcoming event that Mercier will be attending, alongside some of their authors and Irish historians, is the centenary event for the National Conference of the Irish Civil War, where they will be speaking about and promoting their military history series. The books involved in this series are *The Fall of Dublin* by Liz Gillis, *The Battle for Kilmallock* by John O'Callaghan, *The Battle for Limerick City* by Pádraig Óg Ó Ruairc, *The Battle of Cork* by John Borgonovo and *The Summer Campaign in Kerry* by Tom Doyle.



Mercier Press also promotes transgender rights, publishing the biography *My Name is Philippa*, a beautiful recounting of love, life, truth and optimism from the LGBTQIA+ activist, feminist and human rights speaker Philippa Ryder. This wonderful biography speaks of Philippa's journey from a young boy growing up in the 1960s to the woman and activist she is today.

Mercier's children's books also place an emphasis on Irish culture and heritage – for example, *Irish Leprechaun Stories* by Bairbre McCarthy. This beautifully fun collection of stories is about a shoemaker leprechaun from the Irish fairy kingdom who gets up to all kinds of mischief and can make all your wishes come true if you successfully catch and outsmart him.



Another amazing collection of children's stories that Mercier published is *Darby O'Gill and the Good People* by Brian McManus, which depicts 19th century Ireland as a place where humans and fairies collide and tells of friendships, enemies and quests through a charming and witty anthology dedicated to Irish folklore.



# BookBar

BY CAITLIN DAVIES, DANIELLE HERNANDEZ AND GEORGIA REES

A bookshop like no other, BookBar promises a unique social space as a shop that “brings people together through books.” For founder Chrissy, her bookshop is a “fun, warm, welcoming space...to come and hang out, like your favourite wine bar or your kitchen table. It’s never about how many books you’ve read that year or whether you’ve read the latest prize-winners.” BookBar offers a range of options for bibliophiles to first time readers, with their own book club, ‘shelf medicate’ service, as well as bespoke recommendations online. By mixing socialising with book selling, they continue to excite customers and propel the latest releases to success. June looks to be no different.

## BookBar Marketing Techniques

Utilising a range of channels to their advantage, BookBar have excelled in a range of marketing and publicity techniques from digital campaigns on social media, to exclusive live events in store. The BookBar Instagram account, for example, is home to a colourful feed showing off their cosy space just as much as the chart-topping books on their shelves. Amongst the curated photos

are posts advertising the unique elements of their service, such as personalised recommendations, fresh coffee blends on site and a book club subscription.

Clearly a creative bunch, the team behind the BookBar have not shied away from the latest social media trends either, integrating short reels into their feed in an effortless way that compliments their existing content. TikTok’s featuring the team’s current reads or showcasing recent summer releases fit

seamlessly into the chilled account in a way that will appeal to the young target audience.

And the activity doesn’t just stay online. Upon entering the shop itself, readers are hooked by further bookish marketing. Pleasing window displays and outdoor seating are a nice touch, but the genius of the BookBar is appealing to all our senses. The printed gift guides during the festive season help customers browse for the perfect gift, whilst the mellow reading playlists by the in-house DJ sets the scene for the day. Even the Bottle of The Month wine pairings – chosen to match specific titles – keep taste



Photo Credit: @bookbaruk

buds happy as customers read, making the shop an irresistible social space and the books an even more tempting purchase.

Independent bookshops were once a very key part of the customer journey when marketing books. With the recent Waterstones acquisitions it might look as if this is a thing of the past, but this is one independent bookstore that clearly isn’t going down without a fight. And the message seems to have registered with publishers. Quercus books named BookBar as their retailer of choice during the marketing campaign for Emily Ratajkowski’s essay collection *My Body* last year, even teaming up to host a pre-order competition. Not to mention Picador books who also partnered with the indie bookshop to bring readers an exclusive London signing event during the release of Hanya Yanagihara’s *To Paradise* back in February.

## June Book of the Month

BookBar’s June Book Of The Month pick is Akwaeke Emezi’s latest release *You Made A Fool Out Of Death With Your Beauty* (YMAFOD). Inspired by the Florence And The Machine song *Hunger*, Emezi’s first foray into romance has been dubbed “the ultimate summer read,” with *Bustle* declaring it “the book of hot girl summer.” We follow our main character Feyi, a young widow who

escapes the city for a dream holiday where she finds a new life and new love, whilst still dealing with feelings of guilt and grief for her past lover.

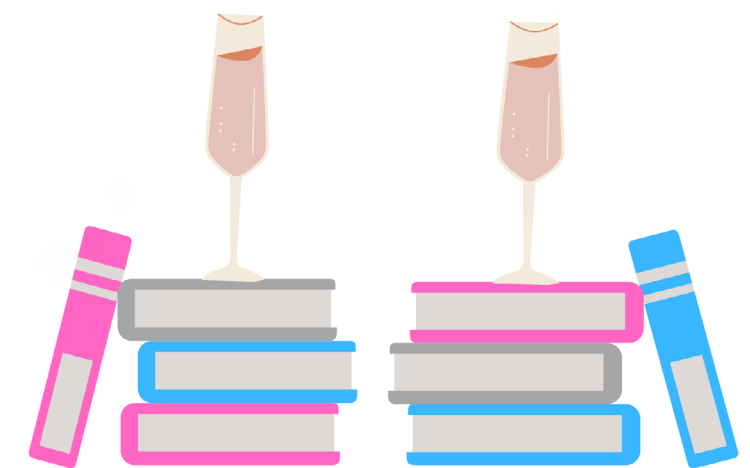
BookBar are really getting behind YMAFOD this summer, with stock of the limited independent bookshop edition selling out fast. Lucky readers had the option to purchase the book alongside an exclusive YMAFODxBookBar limited edition box containing tote bags, nail decals and a travel nail file. In keeping with the theme, a pop-up nail bar in partnership with Faber Books took place on 14 June, with tickets including a limited edition copy of the book, exclusive merch and the opportunity to have your nails painted in the style of the iconic cover.

The BookBar really is a destination bookshop. Although you can shop with them online, their USP is

their lovingly intuitive book x wine matchmaking service. For just £3, you can enjoy a glass of wine (or soft drink) that has been handpicked to go alongside their spotlight books. The pairing for YMAFOD this June is Mon Rose from Languedoc in the South of France, or a spicy Karma Gingerella for those wanting an alcohol-free option.

Previous Books Of The Month which have enjoyed similar energetic marketing are Monica Ali’s *Love Marriage*, Julia Armfield’s *Our Wives Under The Sea*, and Nikki May’s *Wahala*.

Other fabulously bookish events are commonplace at BookBar. This April, to celebrate BookBar’s one year anniversary, special guests Bolu Babalola and Marianne Levy joined other names for a summer showcase promoting their new books and giving readers the chance to mingle and chat to the authors.







# Highlighting LGBTQIA+ Historical Fiction



BY BECCA BINNIE AND CARLY BENNETT

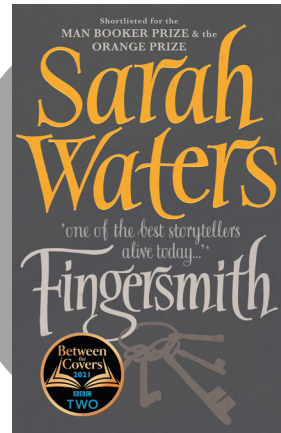
Historical fiction is an exciting genre of literature, it combines both the past and the imaginative to construct enticing and creative stories for all readers. Historical fiction representative of the LGBTQIA+ community is crucial. Bringing to light the experiences of an LGBTQIA+ individual solidifies and celebrates the LGBTQIA+ community's rightful place in societies not just present and future, but past too.

Here we have recommended some amazing LGBTQIA+ historical fiction authors and novels for you to check out! If you're looking for complex characters, intricate story lines and inclusive historical fiction, these suggestions will be perfect for you!

## Sarah Waters and Victorian Lesbian Visibility

Perhaps one of the best-known writers of lesbian historical fiction, Sarah Waters found much of her inspiration while researching queer historical fiction for her PhD. While the time periods of Waters' novels range from Victorian to post-World War One to the 1940s, something they all share is the author's [intention](#) "in teasing out lesbian stories

from parts of history that are regarded as quite heterosexual."



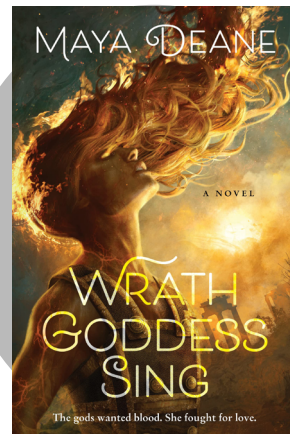
As well as bringing queer historical stories into the literary mainstream, a number of Waters' books have been adapted for television: both *Tipping the Velvet* and *Fingersmith* have seen successful BBC adaptations. In addition to numerous Lambda Prize wins and a Booker nomination, perhaps the highest honour Waters' work has received was David Bowie citing *Fingersmith* as one of his favourite reads.

## Maya Deane and *Wrath Goddess Sing*

*Wrath Goddess Sing* is a historical fiction novel published extremely recently by HarperCollins at the beginning of June 2022. The

novel depicts the Trojan War like never before, combining ancient texts and modern archaeology Deane tells the story of a trans woman named Achilles.

Maya Deane spoke to Publishers Weekly explaining how her touching rewriting of the Iliad myths stemmed from her love of writing and her own experience transitioning, she [explains](#) how the lack of literature for the trans community is isolating but that "retellings give you the ability to let those suppressed versions of the story breathe again" (2022).



This historical fiction provides all the characters you may already have heard of in a refreshing new light. *Wrath Goddess Sing* tells a story of torment and trust in a new and exciting way, one you don't want to miss!

## A Lady for a Duke by Alexis Hall



Alexis Hall is a wonderful author and her historical fiction novels are must reads! Most recently Hall released *A Lady for a Duke*, the novel follows trans heroine Viola Caroll. Viola lost everything, her title, wealth and closest friend and in return she gained her freedom. However, after a war results in the rekindling of family connections Viola feels the depth of her losses and fights to help her friend and keep her freedom.

Alexis Hall spoke to *Book Page* after the release of *A Lady for a Duke* to explain how she writes LGBTQIA+ historical fiction. Hall described how she never lost sight of the modern audience she was writing for and that it was vital the story first and foremost resonated with them. A perfect historical queer romance for the modern age!

More LGBTQIA+ historical fiction from Alexis Hall includes the *Prosperity*

series. Six books construct the series set in a lawless 1863 skytown. Hall combines a cool mix of fantasy and science fiction elements to create a thrilling and diverse historical series.

## This Rebel Heart by Katherine Locke



The novel written beautifully by Katherine Locke takes place in post-WWII Communist Budapest during the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. It follows Csilla as she plans to escape the county that has never accepted her. This fantasy novel depicts brave, strong and loving queer characters who must decide whether to risk their lives to save the fate of the country. *This Rebel Heart* is a YA masterpiece, devastating, complex and a must read!

## TikTok Made Me Read It

With the current, significant presence of book recommendations

circulating on TikTok, it would be impossible to discuss LGBTQIA+ historical fiction without highlighting some of the incredible novels getting notable recognition on the social media platform. Firstly, *The Song of Achilles* and *Circe* both written by the talented Madeline Miller and retellings of well-known Greek mythology in touching and emotional ways.

Secondly, *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* written by Taylor Jenkins Reid. Reid writes a heartfelt, honest and thought-provoking novel about Evelyn Hugo and her experience with relationships and fame in Hollywood from the 1950s to the 80s. This clever historical fiction speaks to ambition, struggle and the fight for forbidden love.

Finally, Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple* Selection. The three-book series starts with *The Colour Purple* which depicts the story of sisters Celie and Nettie in the early twentieth century rural Georgia. Not only is this novel inclusive of the LGBTQIA+ community but it confronts the silence surrounding domestic and sexual abuse in a compassionate and poignant story of love.

These are just a few of the authors making an outstanding impression on TikTok and stand out as perfect additions to all TBR (to be read) lists!

# The Nibbies: British Book Awards 2022 'Book of the Year' Winners

BY CAITLIN EVANS, PARIDHI BADGOTRI, GABRIELLA SOTIRIOU AND THOMAS CALDOW

On 23 May, the British Book Awards (also known as the Nibbies) held their annual awards showcase. One of the most anticipated industry awards of the year, they are often seen as the peak of literary current affairs as they recognise hard work across the breadth of the publishing process. Seventeen trade awards were handed out to numerous publishers, bookshops, and individuals in the industry for their contributions to publishing. Alongside this, twelve books were named 'Book of the Year' in their respective categories. Let's take a dive into these twelve winning titles of 2022.

## **Fiction:** *Sorrow and Bliss* by Meg Mason, Orion Books

This debut novel is based on the separation of protagonists Martha and Patrick. Martha describes Patrick as a sofa that has always been around her growing up. The novel focuses on Martha's depression and her fear of everyone around her who can be potentially affected by it.

## **Fiction Debut:** *Open Water* by Caleb Azumah Nelson, Viking Books

*Open Water* is a story of an unnamed black photographer who is struggling due to his unacceptable love affair and systemic racism. He uses the second person to enhance emotional intimacy while describing his life in a racialized neighbourhood and the inability of him and his partner to resist their attraction towards each other.

## **Non-fiction Lifestyle:** *The Lyrics: 1956 to the Present* by Paul McCartney, Allen Lane

*The Lyrics* is a revealing window into the life and creative process of Paul McCartney. Spanning 154 songs, McCartney offers an insight into how iconic work from The Beatles to his solo output was formed. The two volumes contain new images from McCartney's personal archive that complete this once in a generation book.

## **Non-fiction Narrative:** *Empireland* by Sathnam Sanghera, Viking Books

Sanghera explores in his book how Britain is still benefiting from the empire. He moves across history and journalism to describe his racialised childhood experience in Wolverhampton. In the name of global leadership, Britain still has an aspiration to continue the empire's legacy.

## **Children's Fiction:** *When The Sky Falls* by Phil Earle, Andersen Press

Perhaps due to its excellent writing craft, or the fact that it is inspired by a true story, this novel has taken the children's literary world by storm, winning numerous awards already. Set during the Second World War, a young boy is evacuated to live with a woman who runs the local zoo. He then takes it upon himself to protect his much-loved animal-friend, a gorilla, from the war.

## **Children's Non-fiction:** *You are a Champion* by Marcus Rashford with Carl Anka, Macmillan

In *You Are a Champion*, Marcus Rashford has created a wonderfully relatable and accessible personal development book for the young people of today. This is his inspirational and practical guide to how to establish positive thinking, navigate adversity and believe in yourself. Rashford MBE solidifies his transition from international footballer to one of the leading activist voices of the UK.

## **Children's Illustrated:** *Hey You!* by Dapo Adeola, Puffin

This is a wonderful and ground-breaking picture book that brings together the work of eighteen illustrators of colour, and explores what it means to grow up Black in a way that reflects the diversity of diaspora. The experiences of Black children are depicted honestly to deliver a strong and positive message to the new generation.

## **Crime and Thriller:** *The Dark Remains* by William McIlvanney and Ian Rankin, Canongate

*The Dark Remains* was the late William McIlvanney's final, unfinished novel in his Laidlaw thriller series, which

Ian Rankin swooped in to pick up where he left off. The crime novel follows Detective Jack Laidlaw in his famous Glasgow escapades.

## **Page-Turner:**



## **Small Pleasures** by Clare Chambers, Orion Books

What starts as an investigation into a local virgin birth by journalist Jean Swinney, *Small Pleasures* morphs into a true exploration of the depth and potential of female relationships. Chambers delves into the complexities and hidden details between friends, lovers and mothers in this tale that quietly unfolds towards its heart-breaking climax.

## **Discover:** *Keisha the Sket* by Jade LB, Merky Books

The story of *Keisha the Sket* first appeared online in 2005 when its author was only thirteen years old, yet had a huge impact on Black London culture throughout

the noughties. Close to two decades later *Keisha* is now to be published for the first time.

## **Audiobook Fiction:** *The Wizards of Once: Never and Forever* by Cressida Cowell with narrator David Tennant, Hodder

From the author of the best-selling *How to Train Your Dragon* series comes Cressida Cowell's bold new adventure, *The Wizards of Once*. Brought beautifully to life by David Tennant's wonderful performance for the audio book, listeners will undoubtedly find themselves with a whole new world to fall in love with.

## **Audiobook Non-fiction:** *Windswept and Interesting* by Billy Connolly, John Murray Press

Connolly's first full-length memoir details his life from rags (his deprived Glaswegian upbringing) to riches (fame and stardom, spliced with its own challenges). Told in his own voice, the audiobook is rightfully emotional.



# Upcoming Publishing Events

BY SOPHIE DICKINSON, SABEEHAH SALEQ AND KELLIE SMITH

## SYP Oxford Anything but Editorial: Comms, Events and PR Panel

23 June, 7:00–8:00 p.m.

Join the Oxford branch of the Society of Young Publishers in a new online event as part of their 'Anything but Editorial' series, focusing on communications, events and PR in the publishing industry. Speakers will include Lily Orgil, Publicist at New Frontier Publishing, comms-expert Frederica Trogu, Penguin Random House and Charlie Bush, an Oxford-based bookseller. This event will take place over Zoom, and tickets are available [here](#).



## Power Hour Live: Adrienne Herbert in Conversation with AJ Odudu

23 June, 7:30 p.m.

Fans of the popular Power Hour podcast will not want to miss this. Join Adrienne

Herbert, Power Hour podcast host and author, for this exclusive live podcast. This is the first time that Adrienne herself will be in the hot seat, interviewed by none other than TV presenter AJ Odudu. You'll even get the chance to put forward your own questions! There will also be an opportunity to purchase a discounted signed copy of *Power Hour* as part of your ticket. Don't miss out, tickets [here](#).

## OKHA , The Queer + Black Book Club

26 June, 4:30–7:00 p.m.

OKHA is a book club which aims to create a space for queer and Black communities to come together to discuss literature, plays and poetry by African, Caribbean and Afro-Latinx authors. In order to bring the work of these marginalised communities to the forefront, each book club session focuses on an exhibition led by a queer and Black artist. The sessions also include other thought-provoking components such as panel discussions, film/

documentary screenings and author Q&A's. This month's read is *Feeling Myself* by Natalie Lee. If you'd like to join this community and be part of these ever-important conversations, sign up [here](#).

## Write On! Open Mic: Loud & Queer - Pride at Waterstones Bristol

1 July, 7:00 p.m.

Celebrate Pride month and join this fantastic event where you can submit your own poetry and enter the open mic night competition, which will be printed and displayed in Waterstones Bristol if you win. All entries and formats are welcomed, but the competition is for poetry only. For more information and ticket registration, click [here](#).

## Festival of Arts, Science & Ideas 2022

2–3 July

Newnham College Cambridge is hosting the Festival of Arts, Science & Ideas, featuring a wide range of literary speakers across the weekend. Saturday sees Margaret Drabble in conversation with Jean Gooder, alongside writers packing the festival Book Tent, including Jenn

Ashworth discussing her new novel, *Ghosted*. Sunday in the Book Tent promises more authors, with a specific focus on women's fiction. Tickets are available [here](#).

## Notes on Heartbreak with Annie Lord

7 July, 6:00–7:15 p.m.

Join Vogue columnist Annie Lord at Waterstones, Cambridge as she discusses *Notes on Heartbreak*. This novel is a dark, fierce love story told in reverse, starting with a messy breakup. It details the best and worst of love, the beautiful and the messy. Tickets available [here](#).

## The Mixed Race Experience, Book Launch and Talk

15 July, 6:30–8:00 p.m.

Join Naomi and Natalie of Everyday Racism at Prior Shop, Bristol to celebrate the launch of their new book *The Mixed Race Experience*. Conversation will focus on living between different cultures, growing up mixed race in Britain and their journey running one of the largest anti-racism platforms on social media in the United Kingdom. This event is free, but donations are welcome. Tickets are available [here](#).

## Bradford Literature Festival

24 June to 3 July

This summer, visit the North of England's largest book festival to explore words and discover worlds.

BLF is a major cultural event in the United Kingdom and the country's most dynamic festival, which you will not want to miss. The festival takes place every year for ten days at the end of June and the beginning of July, with around 500 events extending from the city's centre to the district's outskirts, attracting approximately 70,000 visitors. Meet authors, poets, speakers, musicians and artists from Bradford, the United Kingdom, and worldwide.

BLF attracts a more socioeconomically varied audience than any other literature festival in the United Kingdom, thanks to low ticket pricing overall (a standard priced ticket costs as little as £7).

To find out more, subscribe to the BLF mailing list and to buy tickets, click [here](#).

## Buxton International Festival

7–24 July

Recognised internationally as one of the United Kingdom's leading arts festivals, this three week festival in Buxton, Derbyshire promises many events of literary interest. Including conversations with Booker Prize winner Damon Galgut and many other authors across the month, this is a great festival with lots of bookish opportunities. Tickets are available [here](#).



Buxton International Festival



# Not to Be Overlooked

BY NATALIA ALVAREZ AND RACHEL GRAY

*Not To Be Overlooked* introduces a variety of wonderful but lesser-known books to assist readers in finding their next great reads.

This week's column covers a review of *The Price of the Haircut* by Brock Clarke and *Threadneedle* by Cari Thomas.

## *Threadneedle* by Cari Thomas

*Threadneedle* by Cari Thomas is an enthralling mix of magic and romance, set in the heart of London.

We follow Anna, who is a witch learning to control her magic. She lives with her emotionally and physically abusive Aunt who has spent her life trying to teach Anna to control and constrain her magic. When Anna meets Effie, her whole world changes. Effie wants to make a coven of witches and she ropes Anna and two other witches into her plans. Anna suddenly discovers a whole other side to magic, the freedom and wonder of being a witch, something her Aunt has never allowed.

In addition to exploring magic, we also get a moving portrayal of emotional and physical abuse by a family member, and the way Anna deals with it, and how her friends react to it. I really appreciated this element – it was sensitive and brought another important aspect to the novel.

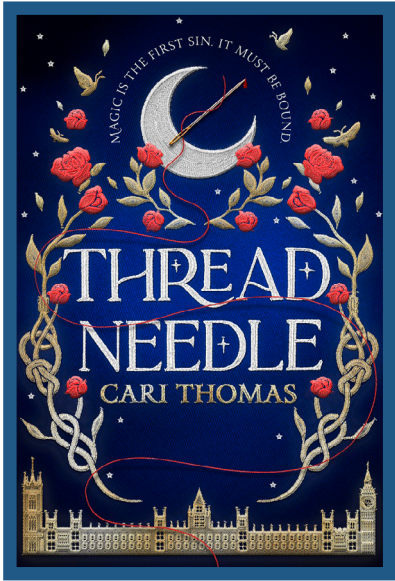
Anna was a very interesting character, she wished to be invisible to everyone while at school, but would stick up for herself, and ultimately did have a lot of confidence in herself and her beliefs. I felt so pleased for her when she was able to come out of her shell and fully stretch her magic and herself.

I think my favourite part of the novel was the magic system itself. Anna and her Aunt control their magic through tying knots in threads, which is a really unique and interesting system! I really enjoyed learning more about how they tie knots to contain emotions and therefore magic. The author has obviously spent a lot of time figuring out the details of the magic system, and I appreciate the

explanations she offered. There are also all types of elemental magic in the book which is one of my favourite types of magic.

The novel is packed full of twists and turns from page one. You really can't trust anyone while you're reading, there is backstabbing and betrayal everywhere! I was on the edge of my seat reading this novel – I couldn't take my eyes off it!

Overall I enjoyed this magical novel. It reminds me of the TV show *Gossip Girl* in some ways – *Gossip Girl* crossed with magic!



## *The Price of the Haircut* by Brock Clarke

If I had to give a single word to describe the way the stories in Brock Clarke's collection made me feel it would have to be 'unexpected' and I mean this in the best possible way.

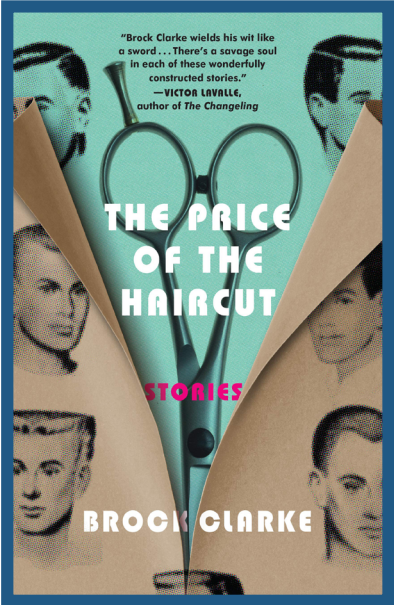
*The Price of the Haircut* is a collection published in 2018 by Algonquin Books made up of eleven short stories. This is his third story collection and it is obvious from the very first story that Clarke has perfected his ability to turn any occurrence into something profound. He examines the relationships between people and their prejudice as well as how they respond to a society that expects too much of them and leaves readers usually with more questions than answers. *The Price of the Haircut* exists within the realm of social satire, tackling important and relevant issues from one story to the next in the form of the everyday man simply attempting to make it from one day to the next.

Some of these stories include 'The Grand Canyon', where a woman on her honeymoon airs her grievances with her new husband in one long stream of consciousness style sentence. Another is 'What is the Cure for Meanness,' where a teenage

boy attempts to differentiate himself from the verbally abusive father who left by giving gifts to his mother without realising he does more harm than good. The title story 'The Price of the Haircut' follows a group of middle-aged white men with bad and expensive haircuts contemplate the morals behind going to the barber they heard about on the news with dirt cheap prices, but who the mayor says made a racist comment during an appointment which sparked a race riot in the city.

Each of these stories along with the others in this collection examine individuals who are, in some way or another, broken and flawed. Each has a story to tell and much like everyday people you pass on a day to day basis, their struggles go unknown to the general public. It isn't until a more detailed examination is done that the hidden conflict comes to light.

I think Clarke's collection is perfect for all readers, but especially good for those who prefer taking in small bits of media at a time. Each story, in my opinion, is meant to be read and then mulled over before moving on to the next. This is a guaranteed fulfilling read that promises to leave readers thinking about it for a long time.





# Shuffling of the Shelves: June Part 1

BY JENN SHELTON, HANNAH MOORE AND HOLLY WATSON

**We see some newcomers muscling their way onto the shelves this week in a variety of genres!**

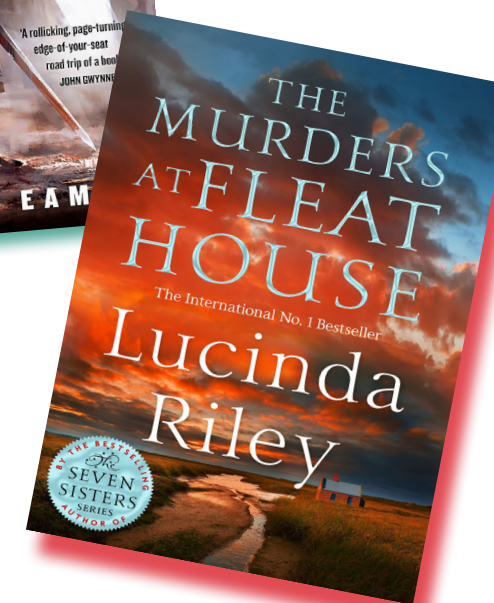
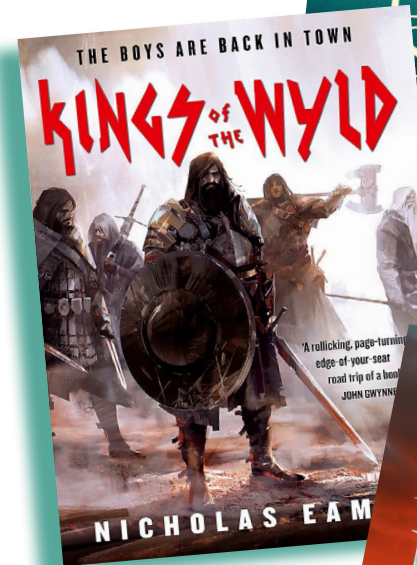
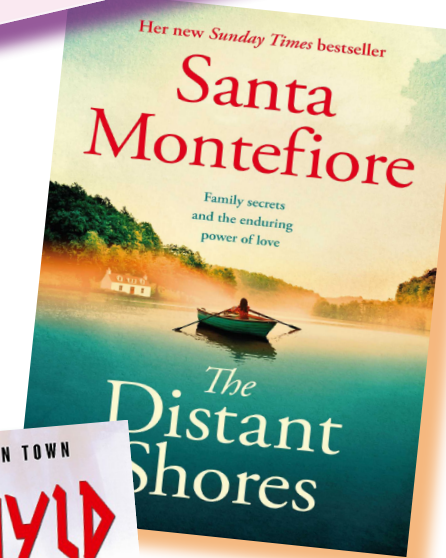
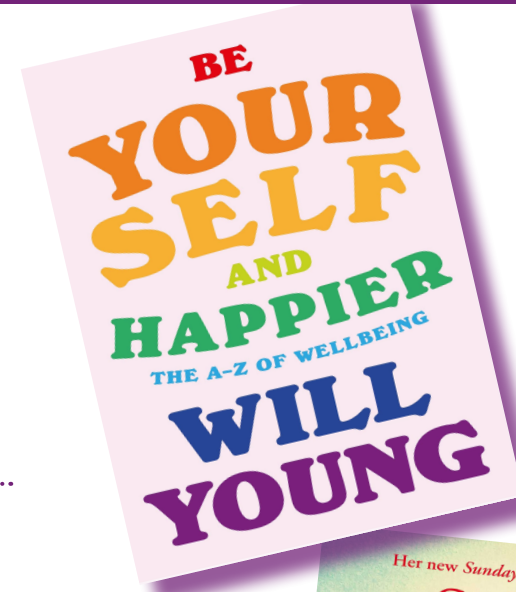
This month sees some new names in Waterstones' bestselling books chart. In the top twenty spots we have *The Maidens* by Alex Michaelides at number seven, *Great Circle* by Maggie Shipstead at number twelve, and *Free: Coming of Age at the End of History* by Lea Ypi at number twenty. All three novels are picks for Waterstones' June Books of the Month for their respective genres. Each has a blog article on the Waterstones website which goes into more detail of the stories. In addition, *Free: Coming of Age at the End of History* is part of Waterstones' Perfect Paperbacks scheme which are discounted paperbacks that include bestsellers and award-winning titles, making popular books more affordable for readers.

Beth Moran has jumped into the charts with her novel *Just The Way You Are* at number twenty this month in Amazon's most read chart. Moran's novel is an uplifting romance novel with a focus on "friendship, romance and learning to love yourself" (Amazon). Bonnie Garmus is another author who has jumped several places this month to the second spot on the Amazon most sold list. Garmus' *Lessons in Chemistry* is her debut novel and is already a Sunday Times bestseller. Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere* is another debut novel that is taking the charts by storm. Originally released in 1996, this particular edition of *Neverwhere* that has climbed the charts is a special illustrated one. The trailer for Gaiman's *The Sandman* has recently dropped which is perhaps the reason for the resurgence of his previous work.

Topping the WH Smith charts is Santa Montefiore's novel, *The Distant Shores*, which

recounts the protagonist's time in Ireland as she writes a biography about a family with a secretive past. To do this, she must speak to the current lord of the house, with whom she forms a close relationship and helps bring his broken family together again. At number three is *The Midnight Hour* by Elly Griffiths, a 1960s crime novel. A detective duo investigates the death of a celebrity after being hired by the wife accused of poisoning him; they find themselves in exponential danger. Author of *To Be a Gay Man* and musician, Will Young's new release, *Be Yourself and Happier: The A-Z of Wellbeing* is at number four, with honest reflections on the writer's own breakdown and his road to wellness.

Social media is giving a lot of attention to Sarah J Maas's most recent addition to the *A Court of Thrones and Roses* series, *A Court of Silver Flames*, which has just



been released in paperback. The highly anticipated instalment focuses of Feyre's sister, Nesta, in the aftermath of the war. As the threat of another conflict looms, Nesta must be able to fight while she also searches for acceptance. Maas's novels have always been a hit on Booktok and Bookstagram, and are perfect for anyone who enjoys the fantasy genre. Dolly Alderton's well-known book, *Everything I Know About Love*, is also receiving renewed discussion due to the soon-to-be-released BBC series based on the relatable and hilarious memoir. Aside from detailing romantic relationships, Alderton's book is about friendship, womanhood and comfort in being alone.

Our noteworthy book this month has a bittersweet story behind it. *The Murders at Fleet House* by Lucinda Riley is a "thrilling whodunnit" and takes the number one spot on the Sunday Times bestseller list this week and is climbing the charts worldwide (Amazon). Riley is no stranger to the book charts with her *Seven Sisters* series being hugely popular. Riley sadly passed before she was able to publish *The Murders at Fleet House*, but her legacy lives on through her son Harry Whittaker who finalised the novel on behalf of his mum. Whittaker

took to Twitter to share his delight at the success of the novel "Congratulations, Mum! Pretty cool to have a brand new original novel top the charts a year after your death. Very you. Thank you for making it so very easy to work on, and to publish. It's a corker." (@HarryTwittaker via Twitter).

During the pandemic, the world saw a rise in popularity of tabletop games including the classic *Dungeons & Dragons*. On that note, our author of the month is Nicholas Eames. Eames' debuted in 2017 with *Kings of the Wyld*. Having been praised by fantasy legends such as John Gwynne, *Kings of the Wyld* has been compared to a D&D campaign and resonates with geek culture. Eames' debut has won three awards: Winner David Gemmell Morningstar Award for Best Debut Novel, Reddit/Fantasy Award for Best Debut Novel, and Fantasy Faction's 'Best Book of the Year' 2017. Eames is highly active on social media and both *Kings of the Wyld* and the sequel, *Bloody Rose*, have been making the rounds on Instagram. "*Kings of the Wyld* took me back to my Dungeons and Dragons days. It has well-crafted characters long past their best but still fighting, non-stop fantasy action and welcome touches of humor. Great reading!" (Ian Irvine).



# Celebrating Amazon's New Disability Fiction Category

BY ZOE DOYLE, AMY WRIGHT AND ROWAN JACKSON



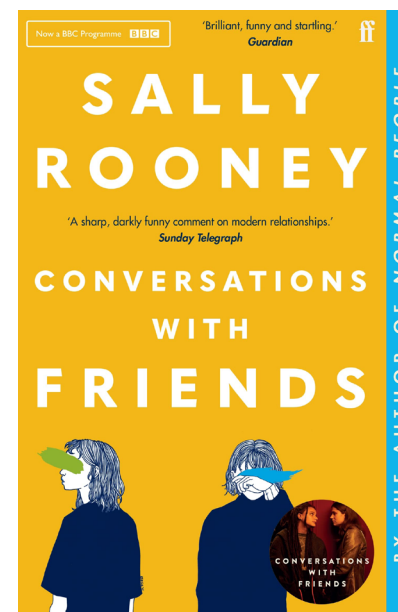
Amazon has recently announced their intention to add a new disability fiction subcategory to their online bookstore. This comes after a campaign by authors Penny Batchelor and Victoria Scott, who explore disability within their own work and are frustrated with the marginalisation of disability representation in the publishing industry. Hopefully, this means that readers can now quickly identify books with disability representation and increase the diversity of their reading. Here are some of our own recommendations within this



category (with one memoir included for those of you who like non-fiction).

## **One For All** by Lillie Lainoff

Fancy an own-voice, gender-bent retelling of *The Three Musketeers*? Tania de Batz feels most alive when she is holding a sword, but everyone else views her through the lens of her disability and labels her as weak and sick. When her beloved father is murdered, she attends the finishing



school L'Académie des Mariées to fulfil his dying wish. However, the school is not what it seems and is actually a secret training ground for women to become undercover Musketeers. Tania has to navigate self-doubt, chronic illness and a dangerous attraction that could jeopardise her mission as she trains. Lainoff explores sisterhood and found family in this fun take on a classic story – expect plenty of fencing, duels in ballgowns and seductive spies! Like Tania, Lainoff is a fencer and also suffers from Postural Tachycardia Syndrome (PoTS). She hopes

to help other teenagers (and adults) suffering from chronic illnesses feel like the heroes in their own stories.

## **Sitting Pretty** by Rebekah Taussig

The creator of the Instagram account @sitting\_pretty, Rebekah Taussig explores her experiences growing up in the 90s and early 2000s surrounded by flat, one-dimensional depictions of disability in the media. In her memoir-in-essays, she attempts to paint a more nuanced narrative – that disabled people are complex individuals who feel and experience a spectrum of emotions and are not merely “monstrous” or “inspirational” to able-bodied people. In a world where ableism is rife in every facet of our society, this is an important book that challenges readers to reconsider the way they view disabilities. Rebekah also explores the challenges of living independently, experiencing intimacy and how the media perpetuates ableism.

## **So Lucky** by Nicola Griffith

*So Lucky* by Nicola Griffith is a powerful story about Mara, a headstrong character whose marriage comes to an end at the same time as a multiple sclerosis diagnosis (MS). The story sees the

protagonist come to terms with the reality that her future will be unlike anything she imagined in all aspects of her life. The author's own lived experience of being diagnosed with MS is evident through Mara's frustrations with how she is treated and ignored. This short novel explores the invisibility that is experienced daily by disabled and chronically ill people. Griffith does not hold back with the reality of living with MS and gives an honest account of the lack of awareness of this chronic disease. *So Lucky* is an important story that highlights the ableism within our society and the damaging ignorance and assumptions that people hold.

## **My Heart to Find** by Elin Annalise

Twenty-five-year-old Cara is asexual. A couple of years ago she met Damien on a retreat for people on the asexual spectrum, but they didn't stay in touch. Now that their paths have crossed once more, Cara wants to get to know Damien and hopes that her chronic Lyme disease and OCD won't stand in her way. However, Cara faces many challenges, including ableism from medical staff who don't listen to her and the fact that Damien seems more interested in her best friend Jana, who is also asexual. *My Heart to Find* is a sweet story, yet it also covers serious topics and provides

an insightful account of what it's like to live with Lyme disease and OCD in a society that lacks awareness.

## **Conversations with Friends** by Sally Rooney

*Conversations with Friends* is an honest, modern exploration of love and friendship and follows the story of Frances – an intelligent, observant, cool-headed student and aspiring writer – in the throes of an affair with a married man. She also suffers from endometriosis. Endometriosis is a chronic illness which causes debilitating pelvic pain before and during a period, amongst many other unpleasant and painful symptoms. It can also lead to fertility issues. Rooney depicts the pain, confusion and frustration of Frances' experience with endometriosis and her journey to a diagnosis, in a way that resonates with individuals who also suffer from the same chronic illness.

It is refreshing to see this illness spoken about by such a popular and influential author. Endometriosis is highly misunderstood and by discussing it so openly in this book, hopefully diagnosis and conversations around endometriosis will increase and improve.

# Pride Upskilling Tips with Nick Coveney

BY TANVI JAISWAL, MISHA MANANI AND GEORGIA STACK

In our last issue, the Upskilling team came up with a varied range of resources for LGBTQIA+ individuals highlighting the ever-evolving space in the public forum. In this issue, we bring to you an interview with the inspiring Nick Coveney. Nick is a digital publishing bod, author, co-chair of the voluntary network Pride in Publishing and most importantly, a member of the LGBTQIA+ community who will give us an insight into his journey as a gay person in the publishing industry and provide his top tips.

**You have plenty of interest in digital publishing. Could you tell us about your career journey and how you entered the sector?**

I started in the industry after completing an MA in Publishing at UCL (way back in 2010). I was incredibly fortunate in that I completed a work placement as part

of my course and was then approached directly by Jamie Hodder-Williams (then CEO of Hodder & Stoughton) about an unique opportunity to work across the company on audio and digital development.

**How do you feel your identity as an LGBTQIA+ individual has impacted your experience in the publishing industry, if it has at all?**

Sadly, I feel like my identity as an openly gay man has impacted me quite heavily at times. Before I joined I believed the publishing industry to be an incredibly welcoming and liberal space, a bit of a creative utopia. After twelve years in the industry, I've realised that there is a lot more conservatism, privilege and heteronormative prejudice ingrained into the fabric of the industry and its power structures than you might expect.

I'll never forget when working as an editor I was seeking to commission an openly gay celebrity as the author for a fun middle-grade series when a senior colleague informed me in a meeting that they, speaking as a parent "wouldn't buy their kids a book by that big poof off the telly." Comments like that should never be made in any professional environment, let alone a creative industry which claims to be an inclusive and welcoming space.

Since 2017 I've been one of the co-chairs of the voluntary LGBTQ+ network for publishing staffers, Pride in Publishing – we try to uplift and celebrate LGBTQ+ creators and voice the concerns of the queer community within publishing as well as running networking events and we'll have a new event coming soon so please get involved if you're interested. There have been big strides made in recent years to increase the number of marginalised voices being

published, including authors and illustrators who identify as LGBTQIA+ but there is still so much to be done to achieve anything like true representation.

There has also been a worrying increase in the number of "counter-culture" and openly anti-LGBTQIA+ books being pushed by major publishers into the mainstream. I believe in the power of books and respect their influence, therefore I am dismayed to see supposedly reputable businesses seemingly embracing authors seeking to create real-world harm to the Trans, Gender Non-Conforming and Non-Binary population.

**Do you have any favourite queer books or authors that you have read or worked on?**

None of which I've worked on directly, unfortunately, but there are so many brilliant Queer authors I would recommend wholeheartedly: Lev AC Rosen, William Hussey, Juno Dawson, Benjamin Dean, Kate Davies, Damian Barr, SJ Watson and Patrick Ness to name just a few of my personal favourites.

**Do you have tips and advice for members of the LGBTQIA+ community hoping to get into publishing?**

## PRIDE IN PUBLISHING

**community hoping to get into publishing?**

Focus on following your passions and strengths. People often ask whether they should take any entry-level role or join a department they're not excited about to try and pivot to something more appealing to them afterwards to which I'd always recommend following your real calling first. It might take longer but companies can always tell if someone isn't fully invested in their career.

There are many great groups and resources available as well as networks like ours at Pride in Publishing, I'd always suggest people join the Society of Young Publishers (SYP) and other groups like BookMachine to meet more people across the industry. Networking and cultivating your curiosity about what other publishers are doing will always stand you in good stead!

Despite all the challenges and some of the recent hostility which has been levied against myself and other openly inclusive Queer members of the publishing community, this is a vital and thriving space with some of the warmest and most talented people. The industry needs you, your creativity and all your gifts. So please don't feel like you can't bring your authentic selves to the industry, we need you!

Thanks for reading Issue Forty-Nine! The upskilling team would like to give a huge thanks to Nick for his powerful insights and for sharing his experiences.

Join us again for Issue Fifty, where we will be covering Upskilling Tips for Entry-level Roles.

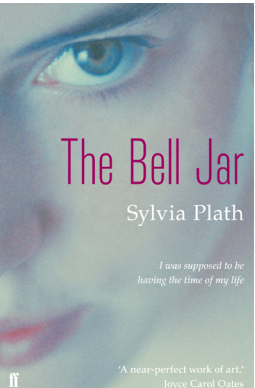


# Sad Young Women on Book Covers

BY HAYLEY CADEL, MARY KARAYEL AND ALEXANDRA CONSTABLE

## “Don’t judge a book by its cover.”

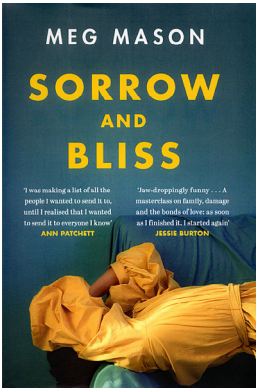
This adage has long been out of fashion with the rise of Bookstagram and Booktok emphasising the aesthetics of the books we read. Data from 2017 has suggested that 52% of us make the choice of reading a book based on the jacket artwork, proving that book covers are a worthy trend to look at in itself. By looking at the current books displayed in bookshops and on our social media feeds, we have seen one trend take the world by storm: book covers featuring sad-looking women. Depicting women covering their faces with their hands, slumping on sofas and leaning their heads against walls, the covers of new women’s fiction are starkly different from any



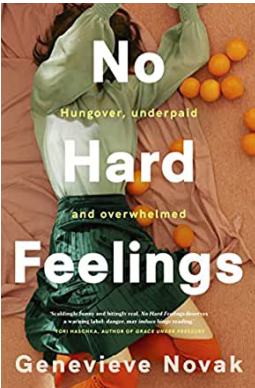
kind of covers we have seen before. As a team of women, we can empathise with the feelings of exasperation, frustration and boredom that these covers convey, and it immediately makes us want to read these books about the lives of these women. There is a plethora of books satisfying this trend right now, making it one of the biggest book design trends of 2022.

## The Sad Woman Imagery

The “youngish, well-dressed woman covering her face” image has been argued to be a move away from more simplistic designs made popular by books such as *Normal People* by Sally Rooney (Faber & Faber, 2018). The imagery creates a sense of potential relatability



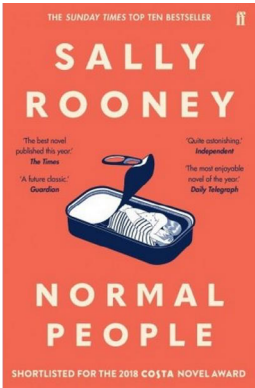
with the protagonist, who is covering her face, allowing the reader to project themselves onto her. Furthermore, this stylish but anonymous person alludes to the themes explored in the novels. *Sorrow and Bliss* by Meg Mason (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2020), for instance, delves into the idea of reluctant mediocrity, with the main character oscillating between feeling like a terrible person and feeling distinctly important, and having to address being somewhere in between. The faceless woman slumped on a sofa in a yellow dress against a blue backdrop invokes the listlessness of a woman in her twenties. Not only can readers gauge what these books might be about from their cover, but the covers can also be copied online, with readers imitating



covers and generating further interest amongst the online reading community. *Sorrow and Bliss* is currently tipped as the favourite to win this year’s Women’s Prize for Fiction, signifying how these book covers are certainly a trend audiences are receptive to.

## The Emergence of “Sad Girl Lit”

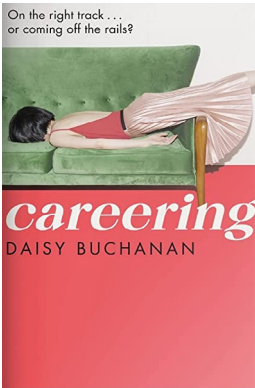
Moreover, this cover also appeals to readers of literary fiction and is reminiscent of authors such as Joan Didion and Sylvia Plath. Therefore, there is a newness to this design that appeals to readers who enjoy 20th century women’s writing, as well as those who enjoy popular releases, as we see a merging of the two. In this way, it could be argued that these covers have almost created a new genre of fiction: “sad girl lit.” Finally, the anonymity of the sad woman to some extent romanticises the themes explored in these novels. Following the success of shows such as *Fleabag*, the theme of young women who are inexplicably sad despite everything is one



which seems to be hitting a chord with readers, with even Taylor Swift creating the “sad girl” version of her song, “All Too Well”. These covers have therefore managed to be commercial and appeal to fans of literary fiction.

## Mental Health

Another overarching theme that these covers allude to is mental health, particularly based on the exasperation of the figures used on the covers. For example, the striking cover of *None of This Is Serious* by Catherine Prasifka (Canongate, 2022) features a faceless woman in a mosaic of fragmented pieces, much like smashed glass. The novel is a bildungsroman about a young girl named Sophie and her friends, who are soon to be leaving their student life in Dublin behind. Prasifka skilfully explores the mental taxation of navigating a new world in an age of obsessive social media and online presence. From the character’s eerie facelessness on the book cover alone, the reader is instantly acquainted with Sophie’s struggle



for personal identity and individuality. The image of broken glass is fractured but unified, offering a whole and complete image of Sophie’s face, thus echoing the emotional conflicts she experiences in this coming-of-age novel. Ultimately, Prasifka’s novel offers a heart-warming depiction of friendship and, although the cover ostensibly depicts Sophie’s struggling mental health, the colours remain bright, vivid and startling, just like this fantastic novel.

## Upcoming Releases

Like all book cover trends, this one will eventually peter out. However, thanks to the popularity of books such as *Sorrow and Bliss* by Meg Mason (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2021) and *Careering* by Daisy Buchanan (Little, Brown, 2022), it is nonetheless influencing book covers across genres. Upcoming releases for this trend are *I’m Sorry You Feel That Way* by Rebecca Wait (Quercus, 2022) and *No Hard Feelings* by Genevieve Novak (HarperCollins, 2022).





# This Is How We Love: An Interview with Aischa Daughtery

BY REBECCA KANE

Editor Aischa Daughtery's new collection *This Is How We Love* compiles love letters, poetry and artwork in an anthological celebration of lesbian love and connection. I spoke with Aischa on how this idea came about, her writing process and motivation, as well as how *This Is How We Love* tackles issues of lesbian representation.

## What inspired you to create *This Is How We Love*?

I think, subconsciously, *This Is How We Love* had been materialising in my mind for years before the fully formulated idea hit me. I have always been obsessed with archiving as a practice essential to understanding the history of marginalised groups whose existence has been misrepresented and tactfully erased from mainstream media. In November 2020, in the midst of lockdown, I launched *Lesbian Love Notes*, an Instagram-based collective categorised by an ever-expanding, archival gallery of love notes shared between lesbians across the world.

The success of the account made it clear that during this time of frozen mobility and social limitation, this celebratory gallery of love provided members of the global lesbian community with comfort, validation and optimism.

## Can you expand more on the contents of *This Is How We Love*?

*This Is How We Love* is made up of over 140 pages of love letters, notes, poetry, photographs and artwork shared in spontaneous exchanges of love between lesbians across the globe,

aged fifteen between seventy-four. Each page features a scanned piece of visual correspondence accompanied by a backstory and a small profile detailing the contributor's name, age, pronouns and whereabouts in the world. It features lesbians of a variety of identities (butch, femme, trans, non-binary, gender-nonconforming, agender, "out," "closeted," married, widowed, etc.), and from a variety of classes, races and religious backgrounds. I'm really proud and feel so lucky that my amazing community pulled through to help me bring it into existence!



## What was the process like? Did you find anything particularly difficult when producing the book?

Affirming, tiring, exciting, frustrating, slow, totally surreal. The hardest part (but also the best, most fulfilling part!) was doing it all on my own. I had to quickly master being my own social media manager, copywriter, admin assistant, website designer, editor, PR agent and literary agent, which is just nuts. Brilliant, but nuts. Juggling these roles with a full-time Master's degree and full-time work hasn't been easy, but it has completely affirmed my career goals and totally boosted my confidence in my own potential, which is always nice!

## What do you hope people will take from your book?

My lack of exposure to the realities of an authentic lesbian existence that de-centres men, undoubtedly stunted my journey of self-acceptance and growing up, and unfortunately, I don't know a single lesbian who doesn't share that experience. As an adult, this has fuelled my passion to create art that nurtures and affirms young lesbians who are frantically looking for assurance that everything will be okay, providing them with hope for the future and permission to be themselves.

That's exactly what I want people to take from *This Is How We Love*; comfort, solace and so, so much joy. I have received and witnessed so many kind words and acts of support since day one of working on *This Is How We Love*, from countless lesbian friends, strangers on the internet, my university tutors and fellow writers. I am overjoyed that a little idea I had during lockdown has become a tangible piece of art that means something to people.

## Can you see *This Is How We Love* as being part of a series or do you plan to do something different in the future?

I would love to turn this into a series of some sort! The amount and variety of potential submissions to future editions of this sort of book are essentially limitless, so I'm determined not to stop. I'd love to do something ten times as big. I now have invaluable insight—which I certainly didn't have before—into the costs involved in taking a project this size from start to finish, from website development, designer fees and software costs, to digital and physical marketing pre and post-publication, production and time. If I were to do it all again, which I hope I will, I'd know exactly what to expect, so the next book would likely be even better.

## Review of *This Is How We Love*

With snippets of post-it note poetry alongside artful lipstick marked napkins, this anthology elevates lesbian love and provides its audience with positive and essential representation. Suited to lesbians of all ages and background, as well as other members of the LGBTQIA+ community, *This Is How We Love* takes declarations of love from all around the world and places them into one creative anthology. The book features both large-scale and more domestic proclamations of love such as within this excerpt here:

"My girlfriend and I were hosting a party, once everyone left, I went upstairs to take off my makeup before tidying up. When I came back down, I found this note from her on the table, written on a coffee filter. In that instant, it hit me that I want to tidy up after parties with her forever more."

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Dripping with love that makes you feel at ease and at home, Aischa Daughtery has created something powerful and assuring. [Pre-order](#) now for £30, or contribute to the "pay it forward" fund to help make *This Is How We Love* accessible for all.

# Learning Curves & Spinning Plates: The Debut Year Experience

BY LORRAINE WILSON

This last year has been wild. Exactly one year ago my debut novel, *This Is Our Undoing*, opened for pre-orders. I had done a couple of blog interviews and was almost, almost, a published author. My book was coming out with a small press so I was unagented and had no further book deals, and I was terrified that this one book might be my only chance to make enough of an impression to move my career forward. Would this book that I loved sink without trace, taking my aspirations with it? I didn't know. I didn't know much of anything.

Fast forward a year and the landscape of my hopes is looking somewhat different. [This Is Our Undoing](#) has been long/short listed for three awards. My second book, *The Way The Light Bends*, is coming out in August, and my third, which gained me an agent, is coming out next year. I have a fourth with my agent and a fifth, plus a novella, in progress. I have been commissioned to write articles, invited to appear on panels and run workshops,

and launched my own mentoring scheme for under-represented writers. It is as if, surreal though that feels, I am a "proper author" now.

If I were to go back a year and sit myself down with a cup of tea, what would I tell myself?

First, and perhaps most importantly, don't stress about reviews. It's impossible to avoid them entirely, especially when you are expected to help promote things like blog tours, but remember this: You'll get some great ones, you'll get some stinkers; hang in there and trust your book to find its readership. There are people out there who are simply not your target audience and will never see in your book what others do, but there are also people who will love it wholeheartedly. Focus on the latter, those are the readers you are writing for.

Second, time management becomes way more challenging than you expect. Having written to self-imposed timetables

for years, suddenly you have contracted editorial/copyedit/proof deadlines for future books, interviews and events for published and upcoming books, editorial rounds with your agent, and in between all of those you are meant to be writing new things as well. Your creative energy and your available time both suddenly look far sparser than they used to, and you'll feel like you are spinning plates trying to balance each project. That's okay. Everyone feels like that. Be realistic with yourself about how long you need to do each project, add some extra to cover the short-notice things that materialise out of the blue, and if that means you need an extension on a deadline then ask for one. It turns out everyone in publishing is overworked; they will understand that you, too, might be struggling and they would rather know as soon as possible so that timetables can be adjusted.

If you, like me, are balancing writing with something else, whether that is children, work, health issues, or carer

responsibilities then those spinning plates become all the more challenging. One of the important realisations of the last year though was that I can now justify prioritising my writing. It's my job, I'm allowed to "ring-fence" time and energy for it, and ask others to respect that. The flip side of that is I'm also allowed to take time off from writing. Now more than ever, as the external pressures increase, it is essential to step away sometimes. If you are in this for the long haul then you need to create a sustainable, flexible working practice that isn't going to lead to burnout in a year's time. Any increase in stress impacts my health quite severely so this balance is something I am still learning to manage, but I'm closer now than I was even just a few months ago.

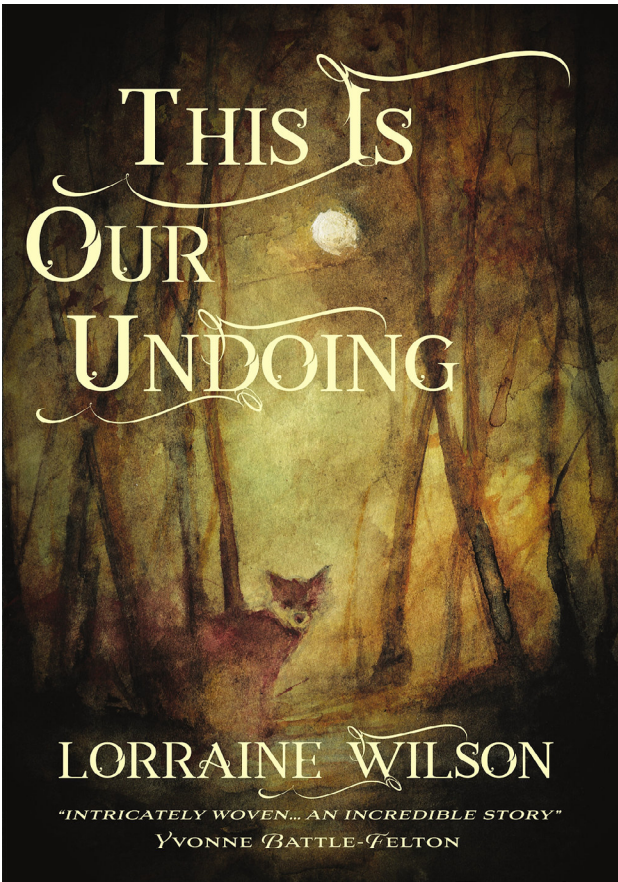
Third, the book blogger/podcasting community is amazing. They are genuinely the cheerleaders of the publishing world and are a joy to work with. However, marketing will remain a mystery. You will never know whether any of the dozens of podcasts, speaker events, blog posts or interviews actually result in sales. And your publisher doesn't know either. Because of the different accounting speeds of different outlets, it is impossible to track book purchases against publicity. Amazon sales rankings are the closest you'll get but they are only one outlet, and their rankings are heavily driven

by paid-for placings, kindle deals and the vagaries of the algorithm, so while they can be fun to watch, don't read too much into them.

Likewise social media is another data black hole. People will say you must have a newsletter, or you must do TikTok, or Instagram or a book review blog or whatever the newest cool thing is. It's not true. No-one knows how much any of these actually influence sales, so do what you feel comfortable doing on the platforms you enjoy, and ignore proclamations of "This Is The Only Way." Social

media matters for two things – 1. Finding a community of writers to share all the highs and lows with (this is so valuable), and 2. Getting your book cover on people's timelines so that when they go into a bookshop they say, "Oh I recognise that!" and pick it up. That's it. The rest is wishful thinking and displacement activity.

At around this point in my gentle chat with my year-younger self, we are probably both feeling a little bleak. So, I'll add this fourth point: You know far more than you think you do. I always intended to find ways to support other



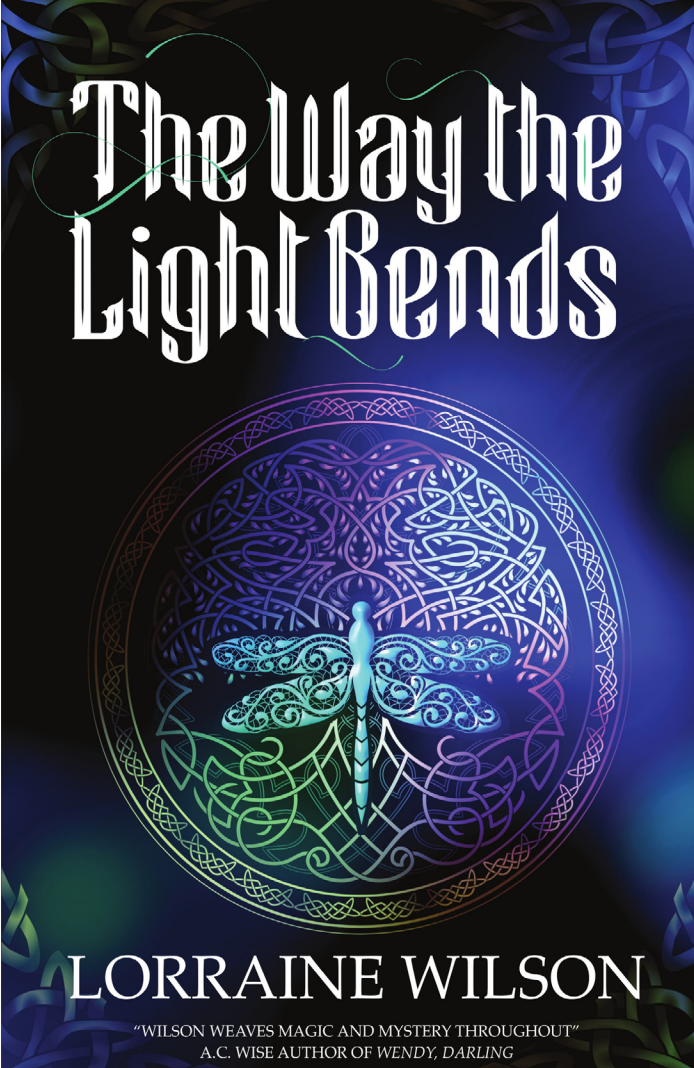


marginalised writers as soon as I was a published author, but around this time last year imposter syndrome began whispering “What could you, newbie author with no real credentials, offer other writers?” The answer is: A lot. You don’t realise how many skills you have developed, or how familiar you have become with the machinations of publishing, until you start working with people who are a few steps

behind you on the road. So yes, you are qualified to offer help. By the same token, you are still learning and the day you stop learning is the day your writing stagnates. So, tip to my earlier self – believe in your own skills, but keep challenging yourself too. And sadly, the publishing scene is unequal enough that people truly need your mentorship scheme, so stop procrastinating and launch it.

Another wonderful surprise has been that I enjoy, and suspect am passably good at, author events. I didn’t expect either if I’m honest. Like most writers, I am a hermit by preference so the prospect of sitting in front of an audience to read my work, or talk coherently about books was rather daunting. But it turns out that being in a room (digital or real) with other writers, talking about the thing you love to people who also love it is ... not scary at all. In fact, it’s rather a buzz. It is however, worth being prepared. Practice your readings, and don’t be afraid to edit for clarity. Practice the answer to the dreaded “Tell me about your book,” and decide ahead of time which potentially sensitive issues you are happy discussing, and which you aren’t. You owe no-one an explanation of your own traumas, and you owe yourself healthy boundaries between your private and your authorial selves.

Which is perhaps the most important point. Your debut year is an exciting, empowering, joyous time. It is also sometimes exhausting, bewildering, and dispiriting. Be kind to yourself. Look at how far you’ve come and remind yourself that this is a long road, and the horizons are wide open. You’re doing great.



# Review of *The Way the Light Bends*

BY ELIZABETH OLADOYIN

Set in the small, quiet seaside town of St Andrews, an unassuming family already struck by the loss of their brother and son, Rob, and struggling under the weight of their grief, are thrust into the chilling mystery surrounding the disappearance of his twin sister Tamsin. Their sister Freya reluctantly heads the investigation into Tamsin’s disappearance, at first believing it to be a selfish act of negligence on the part of her sister; a case of Tamsin simply running away without informing the rest of her family during a time when they were all grieving and needed to support their parents.

“‘You’d better have an absolutely stunning reason’, she muttered to herself... Kidnapped. Tied up by some gimp boyfriend and abandoned.” She liked that last one. The shock and foulness of it, the humiliation. If she were honest there was something viscerally satisfying about the weight of justice behind her anger, as if she’d accumulated years of petty resentments and could only now let them loose with all the authority of her mother’s hurt.” (page thirteen)

However, Freya’s investigation continues to lead her down numerous dead ends, into unnatural phenomena and the lingering doubt that something altogether not of this world may have led a vulnerable, grieving Tamsin somewhere she can no longer be reached. Armed with little more than her sister’s diary and her sister’s friends who seem far more knowledgeable about the complexities behind Tamsin’s personality and the intricacies that make up her personhood, Freya is faced with a long journey into worlds unknown.

The two main characters, Tamsin and Freya, act as directly opposing perspectives for many of the themes discussed throughout the book. Whilst both are engulfed by their grief after having lost their brother Rob, Freya does not allow herself to wallow in said grief, instead choosing to side line it to provide support for her parents, diminishing its importance in comparison to the doctoral work of her husband and ultimately attempting to put up a confident front in any social situation she finds herself in, believing this to be the most responsible course of action. Yet, despite

this outward appearance of healthy coping, Freya is prone to sudden, sharp bouts of internalised anger that are only apparent in her inner monologue.

Meanwhile, Tamsin, who describes her twin brother as being her second half, struggles with the weight of her grief. Her viewpoint, provided through her diary entries, shows her frequently engulfed by depression after losing Rob and the deterioration of her relationship with her family which was already strenuous at best as evidenced by her nickname, “Sheepy,” given to her by her brother to signify her “black sheep” status among her family. With nowhere to turn to, save her close friends, a hodgepodge collection of unique characters whom she sometimes feels guilt for troubling, she perfectly signifies the dangers of allowing oneself to self-isolate and drown in sorrow.

The narrators successfully conveyed the impactful nature losing Rob had on their family and it left me craving more information on who Rob was and how he fit into the family dynamic as a peacekeeper. Overall, we are gifted a very emotive read with fascinating symbolism.

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