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 2021 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.

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

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The Publishing Post
HarperCollins Trialling the Use of Trains to Deliver Books

BY LOUISE TAILLANDIER

HarperCollins UK has decided to use trains in order to deliver their books in an attempt to reduce carbon emissions. According to the publisher, this method can save around two tonnes of carbon per container compared to the use of road transport. Each container can carry up to forty-six pallets of books.

This move comes as many companies are switching to production practices designed to reduce their harm to the environment. HarperCollins is, according to its website, the third-largest book publisher in the country, releasing over 2,000 titles every year. The company is a part of News Corp, the multinational mass media company owned by Rupert Murdoch, which contains the Fox television channels in the United States as well as Sky News in the UK and the newspapers The Sun and The Times. The switch to trains is a part of the corporation’s ‘News Corp Global Environment Initiative’ to reduce emissions. It was HarperCollins’ goal to make direct emissions entirely carbon neutral by the end of 2021.

The publisher’s website also declares that:

“HarperCollins UK has become signatories to the publishing industry’s first and only declaration on climate action, Publishing Declares. The five-point pledge includes:

• Commitments to reach net zero our own operations and extended supply chain as soon as possible and by 2050 at the latest
• Work with supply chain partners and use sustainable production wherever we can
• Collaborate with our business partners and suppliers
• Use our platform and voice to educate for sustainability
• Advocate for climate action, both internally and with our external audiences.”

The first book delivered in this manner was fitness coach Joe Wicks’ Feel Good Food last month. It has travelled from Italy, where it was printed, to Rotterdam. From there, the initial print run of the cookery book was brought to the UK by ship before finishing its journey in HarperCollins’ distribution centre in Bishopsbriggs, after almost 200 miles of road transport.

The next major release to be transported in this manner is TV presenter Davina McCall’s taboo-breaking book, Menopause.

HarperCollins has also stated that it would be sending around one full container of educational material from the printers in Italy every two weeks, starting this past month. After this trial, the company means to use trains for most of the books printed in Italy.

Indie Bookshop Owners Launch Brighton’s First Book Festival

BY CHARLOTTE BROOK

Two independent bookshop owners, Carolynn Bain from Afrori Books and Ruth Wainwright from The Feminist Bookshop, are teaming up this summer to launch Brighton’s very first book festival. Since opening their doors in 2020 and 2019 respectively, these indies have been committed to uplifting marginalised and dampened voices and driving conversations around social change, and their literary festival is set to continue this ethos.

With Afrori Books as the first black-owned bookshop in Sussex, they champion Black authors across all genres, seeking to encourage people to diversify their bookshelves. The Feminist Bookshop, on the other hand, is a space that promotes self-identifying female and non-binary authors, creatives and entrepreneurs by stocking a wide range of books by and about women. They also serve coffee and cakes from female-owned businesses in their café. Each bookshop hosts a monthly book club where they handpick a book to discuss every month. (Afrori Books even offers wine and cheese…sign me up!), so if you can’t wait for the festival to launch from the 24 – 26 June 2022, this is a great way to take part in the important conversations they’re starting.

Through combining forces, the Brighton Book Festival aims to “inspire and enable writers at every stage in their careers to share their work and to champion the power of the written word to enrich and change lives.” The founders state that they seek to “amplify a wide spectrum of voices, to connect readers and authors in new ways and to promote compelling and challenging writing, with special attention to work that engages with pressing social issues or that might otherwise be excluded or marginalised.”

Over the course of three days, across selected venues within Brighton’s vibrant literary scene, the festival is set to consist of fifteen to twenty different events. These will include panels on intriguing topics such as “Masculinities” and “the Myth of the Mainstream”, as well as workshops for “Pitching your Novel” and “Adapting Book to Film.” There will also be children’s book events and interactive sessions involving graphic novels and creating soundtracks inspired by literature, so there really is something for everyone.

While it may all seem very mysterious at the moment, their official Twitter page (@brightbookfest) promises that “something magical” is in the making, so save the dates and keep an eye out for more information and the announcement of ticket sales.
Amazon Shuts Down Westland Books in Blow to Indian Publishing

By Julia Fitzpatrick

On 1 February, news broke that the publishing house Westland Books will be closed down. The company, a subsidiary of Amazon, was sold to the multinational conglomerate Tata Group in 2008 and again to Amazon in 2017. At the time of acquisition, Amit Agarwal, Vice President of Amazon India, said that the move would enable “Amazon to bring Westland’s highly talented authors and their books to even more customers in India and around the world.” Westland’s CEO, Gautam Padmanabhan, mirrored this enthusiasm, calling it a “great day for our authors and their readers across the globe.” He pointed out that Amazon’s “roots are in books.”

Five years later, this optimism has been resolutely shattered. Amazon has, as of yet, given an explanation for the closure. Most in the industry are attributing the move to the heavy losses, which Westland has been carrying, as high as 40 crore in the 2020 Financial Year. Nevertheless, the shutdown has come as a surprise. Westland’s loyal readership, eminent writers, and recent high-profile publications, such as award-winning journalist Nalin Mehta’s The New B.J.P., do not suggest a company on its last legs.

Writers and readers alike have expressed confusion and dismay over the move. Priya Shetty, one of the most popular female authors in India, called it a “huge blow for publishing in India” and tweeted that it is “hard to imagine a different home” for her books. Social media has been flooded with sympathy for staff and writers left without financial security. Alarm bells are also ringing about the implications for the book trade in India. If a company as distinguished as Westland can fall, who will be next?

Westland was sold to the multinational conglomerate Tata Group in 2008 and again to Amazon in 2017. At the time of acquisition, Amit Agarwal, Vice President of Amazon India, said that the move would enable “Amazon to bring Westland’s highly talented authors and their books to even more customers in India and around the world.” Westland’s CEO, Gautam Padmanabhan, mirrored this enthusiasm, calling it a “great day for our authors and their readers across the globe.” He pointed out that Amazon’s “roots are in books.”

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After proposed changes were announced last summer, the UK government has now announced that it will pause its plans to change “copyright exhaustion” rules. The rules, which determine what is permissible after a right holder loses control over their property’s distribution, currently protect UK authors when selling their works abroad and from international undercutting of the domestic market.

The Intellectual Property Office ran a consultation last summer exploring potential changes as a result of Brexit, the results of which can be found here. However, the Publisher’s Association quickly responded with the Save Our Books campaign, which warned of significant harm to author incomes, relocation of publishing away from the UK and further damage to British highstreets in favour of online retail giants if the government introduced new IP (intellectual property) frameworks.

The campaign saw the public support of authors such as Kate Mosse and Philip Pullman, the latter having previously written in support of copyright laws in Index On Censorship:

“The principle is simple, and unaltered by technology, science, or magic: if we want to enjoy the work that someone does, we should pay for it.”

Similarly, at the time of the consultation, Mosse was quoted in The Guardian explaining: “Copyright is the bedrock of authors’ earnings and ensures that everyone – whatever their background, their genre of writing – is properly remunerated for their talent.”

Save Our Books warned of how weakening IP laws would enable unauthorised copies of an author’s book from around the world to be imported and sold in the UK, making it difficult for the author to be properly compensated and cutting into the UK market. Yet after months of campaigning, the government has announced this January that, for the time being, the laws will not be changed, citing a “lack of available data” needed to determine the economic impact such changes would have.

However, there is a certain open-ended ambiguity as to what this means for the future. Responding to January’s news, Nicola Solomon, Chief Executive of the Society of Authors, made the following statement on the campaign website:

“A strong copyright framework works to everyone’s benefit – for the creators and the industries that take their work to market, and for the public who consume it. In publishing, this is critical, not least because of how precarious the business of being an author can be. The IPO says there is ’not enough data available to understand the economic impact of any of the alternatives’, but as Monday’s Nielsen stats show, we have an industry packed full of data that demonstrates the economic benefits of the UK’s current copyright regime. We hope that if and when the government revisits this issue in future, they will look even more closely at the evidence available.”

For more information on the campaign, you can find the Save Our Books website [here](https://saveourbooks.org/).
Industry Insights: Jodie Lancet-Grant rant

By Leyla Memet, Elizabeth Guess, Kathryn Smith and Aimee Whittle

For this issue, we interviewed Jodie Lancet-Grant, a children’s author and Communications Director for Bluebird and Innovation at Pan Macmillan. Both her debut, The Pirate Mums and forthcoming title The Marvellous Doctors for Magical Creatures (out this June), are picture books featuring LGBTQ+ parents published by Oxford University Press.

What does your day-to-day look like as a Communications Director? What drew you to this role?

What I love most about being a Comms Director for a non-fiction division is that every day is different. The sheer range of subject matter is one of my favourite things about publishing in general. Overseeing campaigns for books on subjects as varied as cookery, the menopause, racism and mental health, sustainability and how to leave toxic relationships, means my role is always interesting.

What inspired you to write your picture book The Pirate Mums?

I wrote The Pirate Mums to counter the dearth of picture books featuring families that looked like mine. As soon as my daughters started to realise that our family, having two mums, was a bit different to the norm, I immediately turned to books. But there was little choice, especially when it came to stories that just happened to feature families with same sex parents, rather than being specifically about how “all families are different.” Those books are also important and often brilliant, but I was looking for more incidental inclusion of LGBTQ+ families.

How do you think the rise of digital platforms, like TikTok, has impacted how you implement marketing strategy/communicate campaigns for your titles?

I actually don’t think it’s that much of a change. It’s wonderful to see TikTok give such a brilliant lease of life to fiction – in particular, queer YA and mythology-based novels. But marketing strategy has always been about connecting with gatekeepers and influencers who love the books we publish and helping them spread the word to people who rate their opinion.

Twenty years ago, this was achieved almost entirely through PR (public relations) via journalists and trusted media outlets, or direct to consumers through advertising. Now we have more options, but the job is the same. We still need to develop deep understandings of both our audiences and the media used to reach them – whether that’s TikTok, The Times or targeted social media advertising.

I think a bigger change, perhaps, is that authors have for many years now been able to speak directly to their readers through their social media platforms. As publishing comms professionals, we have an opportunity and a responsibility to work with our authors to help them make the most of that: through book promotion but also through listening to those audiences and understanding what they want.

One of the biggest issues is resource. There are so many ways to reach our audiences now and utilising all of them takes time, which can be a problem for stretched comms teams.

Do you think enough is being done in diversity and inclusion within the book industry?

I think that there is a lot of work going on to increase diversity and inclusion within the industry but more needs to be done. There still seem to be some archaic ideas floating around, especially at the upper levels. Bluebird’s recent book, Maybe I Don’t Belong Here, by actor David Harewood, shines a light on how everyday racism affects mental health and I found it incredibly eye-opening and moving.

As a writer, I still find that there is some resistance to me putting same sex couples in my books without there being a lesson to learn about them. I think there is still an expectation for writers from minority groups to teach and set examples, rather than have the freedom to simply tell wonderful stories.

What would be your best piece of advice for publishing hopefuls?

Don’t be afraid to circle the industry and get experience outside of it. I worked for two years at a PR agency and then one at a charity before I landed my first job in publishing. In my team we have a publicist who was until recently a journalist and a marketer who worked in further education. They’re both brilliant in publishing.
Anticipated Reads: Women in Writing

By Anna Heywood, Alfie Kimmins, Georgia Wells, Meg Jones and Sarah Ernestine

The Invisible Kingdom: Reimagining Chronic Illness by Meghan O’Rourke

• 1 March, Riverhead Books

Reflecting on her personal experiences, armed with the advice and opinions of several medical professionals, Meghan O’Rourke investigates the hidden world of chronic illness. Often invisible to the naked eye and generally stigmatised or misunderstood, these chronic illnesses include autoimmune diseases, post-treatment Lyme disease and, most recently, long COVID-19.

In this all-telling autobiography, O’Rourke pushes for a change in the ways in which the world views and interacts with these illnesses in both medical and societal settings. The Invisible Kingdom offers a key exploration into the history and current treatment of chronic illness, allowing for a clear understanding of the diagnosis. O’Rourke provides a sanctuary to anyone suffering from, or living with, these illnesses, providing them with hope and cutting-edge medical information but, most importantly, a voice.

The Old Woman with the Knife by Gu Byeong-mo

• 3 March, Canongate Books

Originally translated from Korean, The Old Woman with the Knife tells the story of Hornclaw, an assassin in her sixties thinking of retiring from the game.

Great for fans of Killing Eve’s Villanelle or quirky female assassins in general, The Old Woman with the Knife follows Hornclaw, who is starting to make mistakes while working for her “disease control” firm, and an ambitious younger assassin, who is starting to take notice. An isolated older woman with only her dog, Deadweight, for company, Hornclaw starts to remember the devastating journey that led her to her current circumstances. As funny as it is sad, The Old Woman with the Knife makes the perfect read for anyone looking for something a bit different.

Smile and Look Pretty by Amanda Pellegrino

• 8 March, Park Row

Assistants to some of the most powerful people in the entertainment industry, best friends Cate, Lauren, Olivia and Max are overworked and underpaid. To progress, the women are expected to fulfil trivial, degrading tasks and accept verbal abuse to prove that they have “served their time” at the bottom.

As possibilities of promotion pass them by and they begin to reach their breaking point, the women come up with an idea: an anonymous blog detailing their awful experiences. As the blog grows in popularity, more and more people come forwards to expose their similarly unfair treatment. However, as their rising fame risks their identities being revealed, the women fear the consequences of speaking out against those above them, who abuse of their power.

Body Work: The Radical Power of Personal Narrative by Melissa Febos

• 15 March, Catapult

The award-winning author of Girlhood and Abandon Me is back with a hybrid memoir and instruction manual, drawing from her personal experience as an aspiring writer to coach writers and non-writers alike on the benefits of personal storytelling. Melissa Febos explores how our experiences and perceptions shape our understanding of narrative, and examines the criticism and praise her work has received. Intertwining her experiences of academia, addiction and sex work, she questions how our relationships – with ourselves, our bodies and the people close to us – are revealed on the page. It is a guide to the intricacies of intimate writing and a captivating memoir of liberation and intelligence.

Julia and the Shark by Kiran Millwood Hargrave

• 16 March, Orion Children’s Books

Kiran Millwood Hargrave has stood apart as a front-running author for several years, known for her beautiful use of language, sense of place and vibrant characters. She is rapidly becoming one of the most influential authors of children’s fiction in the UK and abroad. Her latest title, Julia and the Shark, has swept readers off their feet, whisking them away to a remote island off the northern coast of Scotland. When Julia’s parents move to the island for the summer, she finds herself on a grand new adventure. Her mother searches for the illusive Greenland shark, a creature that soon begins to live in Julia’s mind. This book shares a beautiful story of mental health, environmental crisis and hope through the eyes of a young child. The gorgeous paperback will be in bookshops just in time for the summer holidays. So, grab a copy, head to the beach and dive into the amazing adventure that is Julia and the Shark.
The Demographic of Audiobooks

By Cameron Phillips and Emily de Voegel

Last issue we touched upon the role that audiobooks play in the podcast culture of the 2020s. This week we are going to dive into the demographics of audiobook listeners, why this is an important topic and its contribution towards the medium’s rise.

The steady rise of the audiobook industry has no doubt been bolstered by the increased range of demographics embracing the format. There is no surprise that the highest percentile (57%) of audiobook listeners are people under the age of forty-five, with the largest individual growth being in the eighteen to twenty-four age range. Why is this interesting? Well, traditionally, young people do not buy books. Readership has fallen dramatically when it comes to the eighteen to twenty-four age group as the ‘digital age’ has gone on: better things to do, more exciting places to be at. However, a ‘positive’ outcome of the COVID-19 pandemic is that people have started reading again, and we very much have audiobooks to thank for that. Whether people like it or not, there are fewer and fewer young people going into bookshops and buying physical books, and an even smaller amount who actually sit down to finish a paperback copy. Ask any lover of traditional reading to show you their bookshelf and they’ll beam with pride and joy. Ask the same person how many of those books they’ve got down to reading and finishing and that smile will probably put itself in reverse.

This shouldn’t come as a surprise nor be scoffed at. Living costs are at a thirty-year high, and people like Kirstie Allsopp are calling for young people to forgo their hobbies to save money. Young people do not have the time nor means. We’ve talked quite a lot about the benefits of audiobooks, and the conflict between tradition and modernism when it comes to debating whether listening to an audiobook is actually the same thing as reading a book. But one certain benefit is that young people have become more engaged with literature because of audiobooks, and this can only be a good thing.

Audiobooks also present themselves as an instantly more adaptable means of consuming a story, something we’ve touched on before but that it is interesting to note given the demographic of listeners.

Eighteen to twenty-four-year-olds have a lot on their plates between navigating adult life and post-education decisions, and audiobooks lend themselves to this nomadic lifestyle well. Individuals in this age demographic often see themselves on the go and audiobooks have filled that gap of time where they previously might not have seen themselves reading. No time to pick up a physical book? No problem, hit play and off you go.

The accessibility of audiobooks to a modern audience might also explain the demographic leaning to younger listeners. Streaming is everything these days, and the major streaming services offer a range of music, podcasts and even audiobooks. With exclusive platforms like Audible offering audiobooks at the touch of a button, this reading medium that used to be reserved to cassettes or CDs has finally entered the modern era. You can easily switch between listening to the newest album release and enjoying someone reading the latest bestseller aloud. The convenience of this has no doubt revolutionised the audiobook industry.

As long as audiobooks are kept affordable, a controversial debate in its own sphere, more and more young people will flock to the medium and, more than likely, will stick with it as they grow older.
The majority of professionals currently working in the UK publishing industry are women. In celebration of International Women’s Day, this article features several of the trail-blazing women currently shaping the future of our industry. Each of these women have answered several questions, sharing their expertise, advice, and experiences with young publishing hopefuls.

Katy Catell
Katy Catell is a Group Marketing and Communications Director for Hachette Children’s Group.

During your career, have you seen a change in the role of women in the industry or their treatment?

“I joined publishing sixteen years ago, and have been lucky enough to work with and be mentored by many brilliant women who have had a significant impact on me and supported and encouraged my development. This includes my current manager and mentor, Hilary Murray Hill, CEO of Hachette Children’s Group.

I have been pleased to see improvements in recent years in the representation of women at senior levels in publishing companies. There’s a way to go, of course, but it’s great to see inspirational women thriving at a senior level. I know, for example, that woman are in the majority on the board at Hachette UK, led by the impressive David Shelley.

It is worth noting, that the biggest publishing companies are all led by men and in the future it would be good to see a woman leading one of the big corporates.”

What advice would you give to young women looking for their first role in publishing?

“My advice to young women looking for their first role in publishing is to establish a network of people who can support you, be a neutral sounding board and challenge you in equal measure. Surround yourself with people who will lift you higher.

I think building your contacts as broadly as you can and not being afraid to email someone in a senior role and ask to have a coffee and a chat should be encouraged.

There are a lot of transferable skills, so being open to taking new experiences which you may not have previously considered, when thinking about working in publishing, can definitely help you secure a role.

If you have time and the means to enable this, do engage as widely as possible at industry events, literary organisations, or join in with relevant conversations online. Don’t be afraid to find and use your voice to build your profile and your own personal brand – whether that’s asking questions at events, joining an industry group which aligns with your values or passions, or connecting with others on social media.”

In your opinion, what actions can individuals make to help create a more positive, diverse workplace?

“I think that listening to understand is the most important action everyone can take to help foster an open and inclusive workplace. Making time for self-reflection so that we can get to know what we don’t know, check our privileges and catch any unconscious biases is important too. We can all support a culture of respect, curiosity and consideration of other people, other experiences and other points of view.”

Laura Summers
Laura Summers is the Director and Co-founder of BookMachine

Community and BookMachine Creative Agency.

What is the best piece of advice you were given when you started in the industry?

“I actually don’t remember anyone giving me general advice when I started in the industry. Either I really am quite old, and it’s now a distant memory – or no one gave me any! I do remember identifying senior people who I respected, though, and emulating what they did and how they treated people and behaved. Over the years these influences have helped to shape who I am, what I value and how I conduct myself.”

What tools and resources have you found that would be helpful to young women starting their careers in publishing?

“If you’re in a big company then you will have a lot of resources at your fingertips and you should make the most of all of them. From the socials to the training, committees and general support – sign up for everything and get involved. Even if you don’t realise the immediate value in this, it will mean you know both your contacts, and also the skills you develop early on in your career, will serve you later on.

I am naturally a big advocate of signing up for BookMachine and attending our events, interviews, training courses, and making an effort to build rapport, having good listening skills, not gossiping, and generally being a nice person will serve you well. Good manners (coupled with great skills) will get you far.”

What is the most important thing you have learned during your time in the industry?

“This isn’t really specific to publishing, but to professional life in general – I’ve learned that soft skills really count. Empathising with others,
The bigger issue, in my opinion, is that while there may be more women in the industry than men, it’s mostly white women. There is still a huge disparity in hiring practices of women of colour, queer people and those who are disabled. I think if we address these disparities first, other issues will begin to be resolved in the process.

What representation do you think we need more of in today’s book market?

“As I primarily read and work with adult and YA fantasy, I can only speak to those markets. While there has been more of an influx of stories written by people of Colour and from ethnic minorities, featuring cultures that we don’t traditionally see, I would like to see more and I would like to see them better supported by the publishing industry. As an indie publisher, one of the things I’ve noticed is the majority of manuscripts we receive are from white authors, and I hope that as we continue to build trust with different communities so we can support authors and help bring diverse stories out into the world. Also, I would like to see more sapphic books! Books featuring m/m have been popular over the years, but I think l/f books need more representation, especially those with identities that intersect with other marginalised identities.

Disabled bi disasters? Yes. Neurodivergent lesbians battling dragons? Nods enthusiastically. Trans woman Fae who fall in love with a forest nymph? Please.”

As a writer, are there any choices you make intentionally when writing female characters?

“As a writer and a reader, one of the things I love is an angry woman. And not the ball-busting shrew blank slate type of angry woman that has been portrayed in the media, and especially in male-dominated fantasy. I’m talking angry at society, the patriarchy and imperialism and uses her rage to destroy the plans of those who would thwart her, oppress her, limit her. Give me Judith’s destroying their Holofernes, give me Xiran Jay Zhao’s Zetian toppling a violently patriarchal society in revenge. Give me female rage and make it proactively destructive.”

Were there any women, whether they were authors, educators, or industry professionals, that influenced your decision to enter the industry?

“I didn’t think I liked reading until I was in my late teens and discovered paranormal romance books, the majority of which were written by women. Even now, most of authors I read are women or queer folk, and more and more women of colour, and that completely influences the way I read, the stories I want to be told, whether I’m writing them or commissioning them.”

Eleanor Marie Rose

Eleanor Marie Rose is a booktuber and a Marketing and PR Assistant for Bonnier Books.

Are there any specific, trailblazing women in publishing that inspire you?

• “Emma Quick: For being an approachable and friendly CEO, passionate about diversity and sustainability which continually innovative and is the perfect example of everything a line manager should be.
• Ain Chiara: For being open about taboo topics such as negotiating a salary and earning a second income. Ain has also always been such a friendly face in the industry.
• Chelsea Graham: The Publishing Post is such an admiral achievement that Chelsea founded, covering everything to know in modern publishing. For publishing hopefuls and employees alike, it’s packed full of wealth thanks to Chelsea.
• Sam Missingham: For the lack of reluctance when speaking out and shedding light on important issues within the publishing industry.
‘

Are there any changes you would like to see for women in the UK’s publishing industry in the next 5 years?

“I want to see more women in senior positions and more discussions and transparency with less taboo around menstruation, time off and maternity leave... There is a lot of work to do from the industry as a whole.”

For more Publishing Industry advice from Eleanor Marie Rose, find her BookTube videos here.
Azúcar, The books. This book follows It Starts with Us on Netflix). Broadchurch on will series is made S&S News (2021). The. UK The Voice Bridgerton brood, as he

Levin, Fairest The Lunar novel will be directed by

by Ian Marshall, Deputy Publishing Director. The book is set to “shed light on how the Duchess of Cornwall has transformed herself from being a royal outcast… to becoming one of the key figures in the royal family” (The Bookseller). Levin, who has previously written three books on the royal family, noted that she had “discovered a remarkable woman who is a great asset to the royal family.” The book will be released later this year in September 2022.

Flipped Eye Publishing Founder’s Second Novel Goes to Peepal Tree Press

From Book to Screen: What to Watch? The return of Bridgerton on Netflix

After the success of the first series, Bridgerton is coming back for its second season this March. Returning to the regency period, the second series of the Netflix show will follow the second book in Julia Quinn’s Bridgerton series, The Viscount Who Loved Me. This book follows Anthony, the oldest of the Bridgerton brood, as he finally decides to settle down and marry, only to be hindered by his prospective spouse’s older sister, Kate. The Netflix original will feature a returning cast from the first series with a couple of new additions, including Sex Education’s Simone Ashley as Kate Sharma. The first series of Bridgerton is on Netflix at the moment and the second series will arrive on 25 March 2022.

Crime Thriller The Weekend Away on Netflix

Based on the novel of the same name by Sarah Alderson, The Weekend Away is a crime thriller and will follow the story of two best friends who enjoy a trip to Croatia but turns for the worst as one dies and the other becomes a suspect with a mystery to uncover the truth. The film will be directed by Kim Farrant along with Alderson for the screenplay. The cast will star Leighton Meester and Christina Wolfe as best friends alongside Ziad Bakri and Luke Norris. The Weekend Away will be released on 22 March.

In the Works

Marissa Meyer’s The Lunar Chronicles series to be adapted for film

An animated adaptation of the young adult series The Lunar Chronicles by Marissa Meyer is in the works. The rights for the series were acquired by Locksmith Adaptation, the team behind Ron’s Gone Wrong (2021). The deal was negotiated on behalf of Meyer by CAA and Jill Grinberg Literary Management. The Lunar Chronicles is made up of four novels, Cinder, Scarlet, Cress and Winter, and two novellas, Fairest and Stars Above. The books were originally published between 2012 and 2015 and work to reimagine the fairy tales we know and love in a futuristic, steampunk world. At the time of publication, there is no word on when production will start or who will direct the project.

Luckiest Girl Alive coming to Netflix Starring Mila Kunis

The novel published in 2015 by Jessica Knoll is to release a film adaptation on Netflix. Based on the novel of the same name, the plot will follow a successful New York businesswoman Ani who is forced to face the traumatic experiences of her past. Luckiest Girl Alive will be directed by Mike Barker known for his works such as Broadchurch and The Handmaid’s Tale working alongside Knoll who is set to write the script. The leading cast will star Mila Kunis for the main role as Ani along with Finn Wittrock, Scoot McNairy, Thomas Barbusca, Jennifer Beals and Connie Britton. Filming for the series has wrapped up and is set to be released sometime in spring 2022.
Highlights in the Charts

Unsettled Ground by Claire Fuller

**Review by Cassie Waters**

Claire Fuller’s latest novel, which was shortlisted for the 2021 Women’s Prize and won the 2021 Costa Book Awards, offers a passionate and powerful look at rural life, modernity and the secrets that every family holds.

Jeanie and Julius Seeder are fifty-one-year-old twins who have spent their whole lives in a decrepit cottage with their mother, Dot, living hand to mouth without the conveniences of the modern world. Jeanie stays for her health, as she’s been told that she has a heart condition, and Julius stays to look after his mother and sister.

Together, they have been mostly happy, playing folk music and enjoying the bounty from their garden – until Dot dies, and their whole world and everything they thought they knew disintegrates.

Less than a week after their mother’s death, the twins find themselves faced with eviction from the only home they have ever known and forced to confront the fact that the Dot they knew may not have been who she truly was.

Unsettled Ground intelligently unpacks the trappings of modern life and reveals the hopelessness of Jeanie and Julius’ situation. Without a mobile phone or bank account and with a limited ability to read and write, Jeanie’s hopes of obtaining a job and a sense of independence from her brother are slight. Meanwhile, Julius feels confined by the secluded life he has been living and begins to stray from his interdependent relationship with his sister to pursue a romantic relationship with someone in the village.

Fuller’s novel is an angry and fierce rejection of modernity, and a testament to familial bonds and how our family history shapes us.

The Couple at No. 9 by Claire Douglas

**Review by Halimah Haque**

In her new novel, Claire Douglas explores a young couple’s worst nightmare. A pregnant Saffron Cutler and her boyfriend Tom uncover two bodies while renovating their new family home. With forensics identifying the bodies to have been buried at least thirty years prior, the police are led to question the cottage’s former owner – Saffron’s grandmother, Rose.

The Couple at No. 9 truly keeps you at the edge of your seat, maintaining a suspenseful atmosphere through Saffron’s paranoia of constantly being watched and her grandmother’s fragmented memories. Douglas does a brilliant job of both sensitively depicting Rose’s Alzheimer’s and using it to her advantage by mentioning a new name whenever someone sparks a new conversation with her. Not only did this highlight the difficulties of communicating with an Alzheimer’s patient, but also the frustration that someone suffering from such a disease often experiences.

With a relatable and likeable couple at the forefront of the novel, Douglas forces her readers to put themselves in Saffron and Tom’s shoes, knowing exactly when to reveal information and surprise us along the way. From the continuous twists and turns to the simple yet fitting title, The Couple at No. 9 is a book that I can’t recommend enough!
In this article, we are sharing the books we have read and enjoyed recently. From gripping contemporary Young Adult reads, to thought-provoking essays, we have a range of vibrant and poignant stories to share.

**Madhu**

A book I’ve enjoyed recently is *Strangers on a Pier* by Tash Aw, a reflection on the many ways in which migration has shaped Aw’s family. An immediately obvious effect of migration is the physical distance it creates between people and land. Aw himself moved from Malaysia, where he was raised, to England to begin his undergraduate studies, while his grandparents travelled from China to Singapore before eventually settling in Malaysia. While Aw credits his “neutral” face to his ability to blend in, no matter where he goes, he also finds that his family’s complex history makes it difficult for him to answer the question, “Where are you from?” Aw also delves into the emotional severance that migration creates, between not only people and their history, but also between each other. Aw observes the gulf that emerges in his family, generation by generation, questioning the idea that their story of upward mobility should be simplified into the fairytale of the immigrant success story, or that of the triumphs of modern Asia. This is most poignantly depicted in Aw’s musings on his relationship with his grandmother. Aw addresses his grandmother directly, lamenting moments of missed connection and piecing together her history, from her arranged marriage to Aw’s grandfather to her eclectically watching habits. *Strangers on a Pier* is a short read, but nevertheless powerful, with Aw’s prose winding between the tangled questions posed by the nature of migration, refusing to neatly package his family’s story.

**Shaniah**

*Ten Steps to Us* is Attiya Khan’s powerful debut Young Adult novel that I have recently enjoyed. We follow Aisha, a sixteen-year-old British Muslim girl who is trying to figure out who she is, whilst simultaneously trying to live up to family expectations. The novel provides a raw and honest view of life for some British Muslim individuals, as the author addresses many misconceptions of Islam. I enjoyed the incorporation of culture, religion and the exploration of personal faith in the eyes of a young protagonist. I felt that the novel provided a great insight into Islam including Islamic customs and celebrations. I also really liked that the narrative was from Aisha’s viewpoint as it was easy to understand her thoughts, especially her internal struggles surrounding her faith and Darren — the new boy at school, who Aisha falls for. Whilst falling for Darren, Aisha has a crisis of faith and Darren — the new boy at school, who Aisha falls for. Whilst falling for Darren, Aisha has a crisis of faith and beliefs because they seem to contradict her feelings. From this, we get a conflicted protagonist. I felt that the novel provided a great insight into Aisha’s view of life for some British Muslim girls, as the author addresses many misconceptions of Islam. The novel navigates high parental expectations, family complications and embracing ones culture and heritage. An enjoyable read indeed.

**Jia Wen**

The Epic Crush of Genie Lo is packed with mythology from a Chinese classical literature Journey to the West, as well as depicting the immigrant lives of Chinese-Americans. The Journey to the West has always been part of my childhood. I have seen dramas and read many picture books about it. The Journey to the West is about a pilgrimage embarked by a Buddhist monk and his three companions, searching for sacred text; along the way yaoguai or demons hunt the monk’s flesh. Set in the suburbs of the Bay Area, the novel follows Genie Lo, a Chinese-American high-schooler, who is persistent to enter Ivy League Universities. However, a new kid in school, Quentin Sun just has to mess it all up for her. He follows her around and strange things start to happen, which is until she finds out who he really is.

After reading the first few chapters, it was difficult for me to understand why this novel is a retelling of the Journey to the West. But, when it all fits together, it is the most hilarious thing I have read, and has completely changed my perception of the Journey to the West. Of course, the novel is about fighting yaoguai and saving the world, but it also explores the life and struggles of being a Chinese-American. The novel navigates high parental expectations, family complications and embracing ones culture and heritage. An enjoyable read indeed.
It’s always a delight when Waterstones announces the shortlist for their Children’s Book Prize and since its inaugural year in 2005, the prize has highlighted many amazing titles. With all three categories (Illustrated Books, Younger Readers and Older Readers) championing new talent, it looks like the booksellers have outdone themselves with some amazing reads this year! Here is a little bit more about some of this year’s shortlisted titles.

**Illustrated Books Category**

**Grandad’s Camper** by Harry Woodgate

It comes as no major surprise that Harry Woodgate’s *Grandad’s Camper* is on the shortlist this year. Woodgate’s talents have stolen the hearts of many picture book lovers, both young and old. *Grandad’s Camper* follows a grandfather and grandchild duo enjoying stories from the grandfather’s past. The grandfather talks about how he and Gramps fell in love whilst travelling in an old minibus, ultimately leading to the young girl and her father fixing the van and going on an adventure to the beach. This picture book is a delightfully warm depiction of the importance of remembering loved ones.

**Out to Sea** by Helen Kellock

Praised by David Walliams as “one of the most gorgeous picture books [he has] ever seen,” this story follows Lara on a journey of grief, after losing her grandmother. With stunning watercolour illustrations throughout, this book is about finding hope and strength with family in the darkest of times. Written and illustrated by Helen Kellock, *Out to Sea* shows its reader a unique perspective in a truly uplifting and emotive way – this is a truly beautiful story for readers to enjoy.

**Younger Readers Category**

**The Last Bear** by Hannah Gold

The Last Bear is a beautiful story written by Hannah Gold and illustrated by Levi Pinfold – winner of the Kate Greenaway Medal and illustrator of the 20th anniversary *Harry Potter* edition covers. The story revolves around April and a chance encounter with a lone polar bear. This touching story boasts an intriguing animal adventure while also subtly linking to climate change by teaching children that nobody is too small to make a difference. Described as “quite unforgettable” by Michael Morpurgo, this is certainly a book worthy of the nomination.

**Me, My Dad and the End of the Rainbow** by Benjamin Dean

Previously featured as the Waterstones Children’s Book of the Month for February 2021, *Me, My Dad and the End of the Rainbow* is full of heart, family and relationships. This heart-warming story written by Benjamin Dean, with illustrations by Sandhya Prabhat, follows Archie and his friends on a quest to discover why his parents are separating. However, what he finds might not be exactly what he imagined. Follow Archie in his journey of self-discovery as his story will be one that stays with you long after you turn the last page.

**Older Fiction Category**

**Not My Problem** by Ciara Smyth

A funny coming of age novel following Aideen, a girl who thinks other people’s problems are easy to solve. This belief results in Aideen becoming the school ‘fixer’ and leads to her obtaining quick pro quos and an “unexpected chance at love.” This brilliantly quick-witted novel (which is perfect for fans of *Derry Girls*), features an LGBTQ+ relationship, relatable characters and explores topics such as poverty, alcoholism and toxic relationships. Published by Andersen Press, this is the second title from the author of *The Falling in Love montage*.

**The Gilded Ones** by Namina Forna

This West African inspired fantasy series by Namina Forna puts oppressive patriarchal rule under the microscope. In a society where a woman must bleed red to prove her purity, sixteen-year-old Deka bleeds gold – the colour of a demon – and is sentenced to death. But when a stranger sweeps her away to Otera’s capital city, Deka is offered a choice: use her gifts to fight for the Emperor or be destroyed. With positive representation of friendship between girls, *The Gilded Ones* is a refreshing and immersive YA with a feminist twist.
2022 Romance Book Design

By Maisie Jane Garvin, Beccy Fish, Juliette Tulloch and Giulia Caparrelli

The month of love may be over but our list of highly anticipated 2022 romance releases is ever-growing. With the help of social media, especially TikTok, there was a huge rise in the popularity of the romance genre last year. Authors who had been writing novels for years rose in popularity, such as Colleen Hoover, who saw her backlist books reach number one on the New York Times Bestseller List for the first time. We decided to curate a list of upcoming romance books we are looking forward to this year, where the covers are almost as cute as the stories inside…

Out on 12 May by Penguin, Book Lovers is New York Times bestselling author Emily Henry’s newest book. There is a lot of anticipation for this novel, as she has gained popularity from her other romance books Beach Read and You and Me on Vacation. Following two rival characters who work in publishing, Book Lovers is set to ignite the enemies to lovers trope. The cover is eye-catching with bold, primary colours matching the style of her earlier novels. The two figures in separate boats seem to set the tone of the novel, which starts off with the respective love interests at a distance from each other; however, just like boats in the water, they can’t help drifting towards one another. The sunset over the mountains is able to encapsulate the summer atmosphere of the book, since the narrative follows protagonist Nora’s month-long getaway in August. Once again, as with Henry’s earlier publications, the U.K. and U.S. editions are set to have different cover designs, so keep an eye out to see the differences.

Colleen Hoover has seemingly overtaken the world of books overnight, so who better to rely on for another romance title? Reminders of Him (18 January) follows Keena Rowan who has returned after five years in prison with hopes to mend her relationship with her young daughter. The only person who has not isolated her is bar owner Ledger. As their relationship grows, Keena is faced with the weight of handling the risks of the past to build hope for her future. Maintaining the simple cover designs of her previous novels It Ends With Us and Ugly Love, the typography remains bold and sans serif; however, it contrasts the colour of the background unlike in the complementary style of her previous books. The faded blue and red hint at the romance genre with their tender connotations. However, with the incorporation of birds, often used to represent freedom, the sombre storyline of Keena’s relationship with her daughter is implied. The cover undoubtedly owns its place within Hoover’s literary world, ready to be recognised as her work for romance fans.

Freya Marske’s A Marvellous Light from the Last Binding trilogy, shortlisted for the Romance Novel Awards, will officially have a sequel on 1 November. Tor.com Publishing’s A Restless Truth has been described by its author as “lesbian Knives Out on a boat” and is hotly anticipated after the love for characters Robin and Edwin from the first instalment. The sequel follows Robin’s sister, Maud Blyth, and her journey on the R.M.S. Lyric towards New York, blending history, fantasy and romance. Amongst loathsome aristocratic suspects, Maud and the beautiful stranger Violet Debenham must solve a murder. Keeping with the silhouette theme, A Restless Truth’s cover design echoes Maud’s sea adventure in the variants of blue and turquoise, enveloping the two main love interests in magical swirls and blossoming flowers. The design is courtesy of Will Staehle, known for his bold and contemporary cover designs such as the celebrated covers of Circe (Little Brown, 2018) and A Darker Shade of Magic (Tor.com Publishing, 2015).

Best-selling author Beth O’Leary is back with a new novel, The No-Show, out on 12 April. The story’s premise is that three women have been asked out on a date on Valentine’s Day by the same man. With her typical heart-warming humour, O’Leary sets herself to explore the heartbreaks in dating and the unexpected turns love can take. The cover features the same typography used in her previous novels, which gives her work a cohesive brand. The illustration is simple, yet effective, containing all the elements needed: the red rose and wine, symbols of love; a mobile phone hinting at ghosting; suspiciously abandoned belongings. The spotlight is (literally) on an unfinished business where people have gone missing; the hanging bulk is best seen as a theatre limelight, signalling the beginning of the performance, but can also act as a scrutinising scene in an investigation. Overall, the playful mood and bright colours are a perfect mix to entice readers.
The classics team have decided to introduce a new feature to The Publishing Post where we discuss and compare caricatures featured in classic literature. When referencing caricatures, we typically mean archetypal characters. The introductory character we are focusing on here is the witch. The witch is commonly used in classic literature and can help to explain various contexts in society. We have decided to include examples of witches from a scope of literature to see the progression of this character over time. From Shakespeare to Philippa Gregory, here is our examination of the classic witch in literature.

Macbeth by William Shakespeare

Perhaps one of the more iconic examples of the witch is the three witches that are featured in Shakespeare’s play Macbeth. These famous three are the first characters that we meet, and they play a pivotal role in shaping Macbeth’s ambition. From their famous spells and chants, the three witches are continuously symbolic in The Scottish play and become viewed as agents of evil and chaos to the characters who interact with them. They fuel Macbeth and spark the initial plan for the character to kill the King, become Thane of Cawdor and eventually take the throne himself. Once Lady Macbeth hears of this, the downfall for the characters begins while the witches witness and profess all that occurs.

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz by Lyman Frank Baum

With Lyman Frank Baum’s renowned novel, The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, readers receive a vibrant adventure through the nominal land of Oz, as Dorothy takes part in a fantastical quest that sees her find her way home to Kansas.

While the novel centres around several fantastic elements, Frank Baum incorporates perhaps two of the most diametrically opposed witches in literature — Glinda and Miss Almira Gulch, i.e., the Good Witch and Wicked Witch of the West.

Embodying powerful restraint, complex motivation and social order, Glinda the Good Witch controls the Southern portion of Oz and digresses from traditional notions of the witch, becoming a guiding authority for Dorothy and her companions.

Alternatively, Miss Almira Gulch, the Wicked Witch of the West, captures and emphasises the image of the traditionally demonised witch. Her actions are selfish, deceitful and volatile. She pursues power, exudes chaos and melts away under the purity of water.

Individually, the witches are minor representations of already established archetypes, but, when paralleled, their dispositions and representative ideals present a strong social paradigm regarding Lyman Frank Baum’s ideologies.

Narnia by C.S. Lewis

As the main villain in the first and second books (The Magician’s Nephew and The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe) of The Chronicles of Narnia, Jadis the White Witch is also known as the Queen of Narnia. Her character is ‘summoned’ in the first book by a little boy named Digory. Jadis’ evil persona is clearly depicted in the second book of the chronicles where we see her freeze the whole of Narnia.

The depiction and traits of the White Witch’s character in Narnia are common as far as witch depictions go. In The Magician’s Nephew and The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, she meets the children and, at first, tries to trick them by being kind and helpful. She initially succeeds in this but ultimately ends up defeated. Her appearance, of course, is always breath-taking and charming.

Philippa Gregory’s historical fiction series The Cousin’s War embellishes and retells the politically complex era of the War of the Roses from the perspective of the prominent female figures of the period. Gregory gives these women a voice and emphasises their importance and influence in court, highlighting the precarious position of opinionated women during this time. In her retellings, Jaquette of Luxembourg and her daughter Elizabeth Woodville (later wife of Edward IV) are suspected of using witchcraft to their political advantage, the former actually standing trial for witchcraft in 1470. The two women are portrayed as intelligent, tactical and manipulative, in the same vein as the traditional mythology of the ‘witch’. However, their plight is empowering and encouraging within a deeply misogynistic and patriarchal society that sought to oppress female influence. Gregory’s idea that these women manipulated historical events provides an escapist and engaging narrative against the less vibrant reality.
Devotions: an Interview with Tara Monjazeb

By Alice Maher

This issue, we speak with final year literature student Tara about her creation of Devotions, a weekly digital newsletter of personal essays. Inspired by her favourite poet Mary Oliver, Tara has created an intimate publication that celebrates the small details of her everyday reality. In the following interview, Tara explains the inspiration behind her project, the importance of being present on multiple formats and her desire to be a part of the publishing industry.

Where did you get the inspiration to create Devotions?

“I turned to poetry to ground myself during the pandemic, and it pretty much changed my life. The whole genre is ultimately focused on deep observation; it encouraged me to pay attention to my feelings and surroundings. I was in search of purpose, and being vulnerable has led me to build so many special friendships throughout the pandemic, so I gave it a go. It’s mostly for myself, as a form of therapy, but it’s the responses to it that keeps me going.”

Why did you decide to format Devotions as a newsletter?

“When it comes to vulnerability, I think intimacy is really important. So many important relationships in my life have thrived through one-on-one conversations. I want to recreate the effects of that, to make people feel like they have a space where they can open their hearts for a few minutes once a week, even if it’s just to self-reflect on their own.”

How can we access Devotions? Is it print or digital? How can somebody subscribe to the newsletter?

“It’s digital on Substack! The link to subscribe is at devotions.substack.com. You can view your statistics on the Substack dashboard and when a post doesn’t do as well, it can be hard not to take it personally. But the growth has been natural, so I try not to focus on numbers too much. What matters are the conversations I’ve had, with people of all ages and disciplines, have been the most rewarding part of the process.”

What type of content can you expect to find if you are a reader of Devotions?

“I write a personal essay every week, and I always incorporate poems or excerpts of literature. Towards the bottom, I give book and poetry reviews/recommendations and general reflections on things I’ve been enjoying that week.”

How important do you think it is to be accessible on multiple platforms/different formats?

“I’ve always loved capturing small moments in my daily life and immortalizing them. Overall, my newsletter is a reflection of me and adding more digital layers to that can make me seem more approachable and human. I love when people reach out to me, and sharing my newsletter on social media (and vice versa) has led to some special connections.”

Have you faced any challenges during your process of setting up the newsletter?

“Substack is an accessible and user-friendly platform. Content-wise, it can be hard to be vulnerable on the internet. I’ve had my doubts. I try not to focus on numbers too much. What matters are the conversations I’ve had, with people of all ages and disciplines, have been the most rewarding part of the process.”

What skills have you developed during this process?

“I do think my writing has gotten better… I’ve also learned a lot about self-discipline and time management… What I didn’t expect, though, is that I’ve been refining my people skills. The conversations I’ve had, with people of all ages and disciplines, have been the most rewarding part of the process.”

Do you want to have a future in the publishing industry? If so, why? What about publishing inspires you?

“Yes, I do! I’ve always loved reading and literature, but something I learned recently – through writing Devotions, mainly – is that although

I’ve noticed you extend your ‘public diary’ onto other platforms including TikTok and Instagram, how important do you think it is to be accessible on multiple platforms/different formats?

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Upcoming Publishing Events

**Galatea Launch Day**

3 March, 8:30 – 5:30pm

If you are a fan of Madeline Miller’s *The Song of Achilles* or *Circe*, don’t miss out on the launch of her new short story, *Galatea*, which focuses on the mythological story of Galatea and Pygmalion. The event will take place in Durham Waterstones and the book store will open half an hour early that morning. There will be cupcakes on arrival for any early birds who wish to purchase *Galatea*. For more information, click [here](#).

**Meet Alex Gray**

5 March, 12:00 pm

If you love reading crime, you won’t want to miss this free event. Best-selling crime novelist, Alex Gray, will be signing copies of the latest installment of her DSI Lorimer series, *Echo of the Dead*. The event will be held at Durham Waterstones. The new installment follows DSi Lorimer and his friend as they get wrapped up in a chase for a serial killer whilst on holiday in Glencoe. You can purchase a copy at the book signing. For more information, click [here](#).

**Farnham Literary Festival**

5-13 March

Farnham Literary Festival promises a fantastic range of events, from workshops on writing to advice on getting published. Various authors and speakers will be present, including A.K. Blakemore, Alex Preston, Annie Garthwaite, and Julia Crouch. There will be workshops and events that focus on a range of genres, including historical fiction and crime. There will also be a poetry competition with prizes for the winners. For more information and ticket prices, click [here](#).

**Historical Women and Women’s History**

10 March, 6:00 – 7:30 pm

Cambridge Waterstones are celebrating International Women’s Day 2022 with an event hosting Annie Garthwaite, author of *Cecily*, a novel about Cecily Neville, Duchess of York, one of the women at the heart of the War of the Roses. Garthwaite will be in conversation with Dr Tory Young, lecturer in modern and contemporary literature at Anglia Ruskin University. They will be discussing both Cecily Neville and other women in history. For more information and ticket prices, click [here](#).

**Delia Smith — Live on Stage in London**

8 March, 7:00 — 8:15 pm

Head on down to West London’s Conway Hall to hear Alistair Campbell in conversation with one of Britain’s most beloved cookery writers, Delia Smith. This in-person event, organised by How To Academy, invites audience members to think more deeply about themselves and the world around them as they listen to Delia speaks about the writers that have inspired her to think big. Tickets range in price from £32.13 to £71.22 and can be purchased via Eventbrite [here](#).

**Onsite (Hybrid) — Book Launch: Latchkey Ladies by Marjorie Grant**

15 March, 2:00 – 3:00 pm

In celebration of Handheld Press’ newly published edition of Canadian writer Marjorie Grant’s long-forgotten novel, *Latchkey Ladies*, Handheld Press’ founder, Kate Macdonald will be discussing the book with Scottish author and academic Sarah LeFanu. Set in 1921 at the end of the First World War, *Latchkey Ladies* is a powerful novel about women navigating their newfound freedoms whilst trying to maintain a balance between independence and disaster. The book’s launch will be a hybrid event, with free tickets for the in-person event at the Guildhall Library or free online access tickets available [here](#).

**BookBar Spring Sessions**

Multiple dates throughout March

Independent bookshop, cafe and wine bar BookBar has announced a brilliant line-up of bookish events for their Spring Sessions events programme. All of the following events will be taking place in person at the North London based bookshop with each ticket including a copy of the book.

- **15 March, 7:00 pm: ‘What A Shame’ with Abigail Bergstrom**
- **16 March, 7:00 pm: ‘Love Marriage’ with Monica Ali**
- **29 March, 7:00 pm: ‘Our Wives Under the Sea’ with Julia Armfield**

**Tickets for the BookBar Spring Sessions can be purchased directly from the bookshop’s website [here](#).**

**Coles Book Club: Annabel Abbs — The Language of Food**

24 March, 7:00 pm

Bicester-based Coles Books is hosting a special evening in conversation with historical fiction writer Annabel Abbs to mark the publication of her latest novel, *The Language of Food*, which celebrates the revolutionary cookery writer Eliza Acton. Tickets can be reserved by ordering a hardback copy of the book, hand signed by the author and complete with intricately patterned edges via the Coles Books website [here](#).

**Coles Bookshop Spring Sessions**

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By Jenni Fer hiLL, Leah Bird and aiMee WhITTL e

**Marketing and Publicity – Hawthorn Press**

**Closing Date:** 10 March 2022  
**Salary:** £15 an hour  
**Location:** Stroud but fully remote/home based.

You will be working on new projects, giving feedback on book blurbs and AI sheets, devising promotional and marketing campaigns, organising and promoting book launches. You will also be sending out press releases and media stories, liaising with authors and the media, designing and posting adverts and more.

Being familiar with book systems such as Onix, Stison and Edelweiss is desirable as well as networking abilities, and you must have your own computer.

Apply [here](#).

**Editorial Assistant – Bloomsbury Visual Arts**

**Closing Date:** 7 March 2022  
**Salary:** £23,000  
**Location:** London

Bloomsbury are looking for an Editorial Assistant to provide administrative and organisational support within Bloomsbury Visual Arts, part of their academic division.

You will be working on the Architecture list, assisting the Publisher for Architecture in the effective management of print and digital products throughout the publication process. This includes liaising with authors to ensure typescripts are delivered on time, preparing typescripts for production (including evaluating image quality and selection, and securing images), writing and editing marketing and cover copy, briefing cover designers, sending proposals and draft typescripts for review, and conducting market research to help in the development of new book projects.

Administrative duties include creating and maintaining accurate title records on internal Bloomsbury databases and managing the backlist and reprint administration.

The ideal candidate will be an effective collaborator and communicator with excellent written and verbal skills, as well as accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation, and also a good visual ‘eye’. They must have exceptional organisational, time management and prioritisation skills, including the ability to meet deadlines and handle competing priorities; strong problem-solving skills and a willingness to take the initiative and work independently. In terms of industry knowledge and experience, Bloomsbury are looking for someone committed to a career in academic and student publishing, including evaluating image quality and selection, and securing images, writing and editing marketing and cover copy, briefing cover designers, sending proposals and draft typescripts for review, and conducting market research to help in the development of new book projects. Administrative duties include creating and maintaining accurate title records on internal Bloomsbury databases and managing the backlist and reprint administration.

To apply, click [here](#).
Indie Spotlight: Blackstaff Press

By Caitlin Morgan and Millie Kiel

Blackstaff River is the river that runs through Country Antrim in Northern Ireland, flowing underneath Belfast city and eventually meeting the River Lagan. Its presence marked on maps since 1791, the river is mostly invisible today due to modern infrastructure, but its presence remains and its silent but powerful nature does not diminish. The Blackstaff Press, based in County Down, can be compared to this consistent, historical and powerful current: not silent – never silent – but undoubtedly ever-present, helping to sustain and flourish the Irish literary scene for years.

Founded in 1971, The Blackstaff Press is considered as "one of Ireland's foremost publishers," publishing a wide variety of literature: both fiction and a fantastic selection of non-fiction, too. Publishing authors and figures such as Monica McWilliams, Kevin Doyle and Tony MacAuley, the tones of the books published by Blackstaff show that this publisher does not shy away from difficult, hard-to-swallow topics, a uniqueness and bravery that is seldom seen nowadays.

One thing that’s always interesting to observe in recent years and months is how publishers and bookshops (for Blackstaff Press covers both!) have handled the pandemic. Periodically and unpredictably over the last couple of years, bookshops all over the world were forced to close their doors to customers in the name of public safety. Nevertheless, while we desperately tried to stem the flow of COVID-19, Blackstaff Press and their bookshops continued to sell, continuing to take orders both online and over the phone. What’s more, postage on these orders was free, and, for anyone too impatient to wait for delivery, most titles were made available to download as well.

Books were a lifeline for so many throughout the lockdowns and isolation periods, so to see a publisher try so hard to ensure its books remained easy to access throughout is refreshing to say the least. Furthermore, what makes Blackstaff so interesting and exciting is how proud it is of its Irish heritage. The proud Irishness upheld by Blackstaff invites proud Irish authors and literature too. With the publisher openly inviting and calling for authors from and submissions about both the north and the south, there is clearly a keen desire on the publisher’s part to represent all voices and stories of Ireland and the diversity and layers that come with it. Blackstaff’s publications are distinctly (and overwhelmingly) Irish in nature and spirit – the publisher, in its publications and its legacy, is in a way writing a love letter to its home country: its history, its present and what is to come.

Speaking to this, one of their most recent books was an autobiography from Monica McWilliams – Northern Irish academic, peace activist, defender of human rights and former Member of the Legislative Assembly. Stand Up, Speak Out is her account of her time working for women’s rights, peace and equality in Northern Ireland. From working several jobs at aged ten, to being a mould-breaking activist and politician, Monica McWilliams has always stood up and spoken out. The book has garnered attention from other strong women, with Hillary Clinton even stating that “anyone interested in Ireland, ending conflicts, making lasting peace, defending human rights, women in politics and feminism will love this book.” Meanwhile, Lyse Doucet, BBC chief international correspondent, has called it “an unmissable memoir of a soaring hope for justice and peace, and of shocking misogyny.”

As well as publishing fiction and non-fiction titles to sit on your shelves, Blackstaff Press also offers publishing solutions to public and private bodies. In the past, they’ve worked with organisations such as BBC Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland Enterprise Agency, Belfast City Council and Queen’s University Belfast. This remains true, whether it’s project management, editorial services, cover and page design, typesetting, marketing or printing.

In an age when independent publishers often struggle when faced with larger conglomerates, this innovative approach is fascinating and eye-opening. It also serves to underline the invaluable space that publishing occupies in our society. Without the skills and services that such publishers offer, we would miss out on a vital tool for communication, and without communication, who knows what else we would miss out on?

We can’t wait to see what more Blackstaff has in store for readers and authors alike: there are no signs of slowing down, and its 900+ published titles only further reinforce the power and might of the press today.
You Are a Reader: World Book Day 2022

BY CAITLIN DAVIES, DANIELLE HERNANDEZ AND GEORGIA REES

On World Book Day’s 25th birthday, it cannot be said that its influence upon children’s literacy is undeniable. From book-themed fancy dress competitions to book tokens, this day has become an integral part of school life. Devised by UNESCO in 1995, World Book Day was first celebrated in the UK and Ireland in 1997. Their mission is “to promote reading for pleasure, offering every child and young person the opportunity to have a book of their own.” This year, it will be celebrated on Thursday 3 March 2022.

In a recent study, it was found that around 3 in 5 (62.4%) UK children aged 8 to 11 enjoy reading (National Literacy Trust). Whilst the report highlighted many positives around children’s literacy, it highlighted that “some children lacked access to a local library, and several had never visited a bookshop.” This year’s theme ‘you are a reader’ is particularly meaningful in light of these findings. Its messaging is encouraging and inclusive, reaching out to children across all genders, races, nationalities and socio-economic backgrounds. In this article, we will be delving into this campaign and the portrayal of this message across a range of activities.

CEO Cassie Chadderton told The Bookseller that, this year, the charity’s mission felt “even more relevant than it did before.” They will be pulling out all the stops to encourage children to engage with reading and champion new names in children’s literature.

World Book Day has been instrumental in exciting children about reading and introducing them to plenty of new authors. Celebrated widely within schools and bookstores, it is a huge opportunity for publishers to spread the word about their newest releases and get them featured on the coveted £1 book list – a selection of books that children can purchase for ‘free’ with £1 book tokens. This year’s list is one of the most diverse yet, featuring names such as Ben Bailey Smith, Sharna Jackson, Nadia Shireen and the author-illustrator duo Nathan Bryon and Dapo Adeola. The charity makes the most of this opportunity by teaming up with Cressida Cowell on her #PassThePen campaign to spotlight the work of emerging writers and illustrators of colour. Published authors and illustrators such as Sharna Jackson, Francesca Simon, Holly Smale, Lydia Monks and Cowell herself will ‘pass the pen’ – hand over their social media accounts – to up-and-coming creators of colour to give children the chance to read a “range of books that reflect their own and their wider communities.”

Added events include a BBC Teach Live Lesson with Frank Cottrell-Boyce and Dapo Adeola and two virtual events teaching children how to write about their own real and imagined worlds. The cast of Matilda will give an exciting livestream performance featuring authors Cressida Cowell, Chris Riddell and Greg James, in collaboration with the Roald Dahl Story Company and the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Publisher Campaigns Surrounding World Book Day

World Book Day is a long-standing, well-established celebration of reading. It would only make sense that children’s publishers would also take advantage of this day to engage with their audiences and market some of their favourite kids’ books. Usborne Books is a fantastic example of how beneficial it can be to go all-in with the complementary World Book Day campaign.

As World Book Day is an important day in the school calendar — and after an incredibly challenging time last year with most pupils learning at home — Usborne have created some extra special events this year for pupils from all ages to take part in. Firstly, a range of free activities will be available online to encourage students to more thoroughly engage in their latest reading adventure. Easily accessible through YouTube, this content promotes the inclusivity so closely tied to the World Book Day mission and features video content from some of Usborne’s authors and editors. These different activities will no doubt be a go-to resource for many teachers in the classroom.

Usborne hasn’t stopped there. They will also be offering a range of live events through the team of Independent Usborne Partners. Teachers looking to go beyond the book tokens on 3 March have the option to utilise their local Independent Usborne Partner to plan and host a bespoke event for their school, free of charge. The events themselves display an impressive variety too, with everything from book fairs and sponsored readings to author visits and story time sessions.

The days of home learning during the pandemic greatly illuminated the need for more inclusive educational resources — an important and timely issue for the target audience of children’s publishers. Usborne seems to be responding to this by providing an array of accessible resources this World Book Day to help every child fall in love with reading. While these activities might not lead to the direct purchase of an Usborne book or product, running this campaign alongside World Book Day will undeniably engage in their latest reading adventure. Easily accessible through YouTube, this content promotes the inclusivity so closely tied to the World Book Day mission and features video content from some of Usborne’s authors and editors. These different activities will no doubt be a go-to resource for many teachers in the classroom.

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Can you really feel whole with only half of your soul?
This is the question that Jenna Weatherwax explores in her debut novel, The Promise of Lightning. This Greek mythological epic explores the idea of humans only possessing half of their soul until they are united with their soulmate. However, the main protagonist Vanessa Reyes does not experience her Happily Ever After, but something straight out of a Greek tragedy. This book explores polyamory, consent and love from an inspiring angle. To celebrate her debut’s release, I reached out to Jenna Weatherwax regarding her inspiration for this compelling fantasy and her experience with LGBTQ+ literature and publishing.

When did you realise that you wanted to become an author?
I was a huge reader as a kid, but I got burnt out on it by middle school and didn’t read anything for two years. I had an absolutely amazing English teacher who encouraged me to scour her library and find anything that looked interesting and give it a shot. I ended up finding an old copy of the first Percy Jackson book and finished the entire series in a week. I wrote my first novel that year, when I was eleven or twelve, and haven’t stopped since. I think that was my Classics education and interest in reading mythology in its original languages were a huge part in inspiring the actual craft of my writing. It’s hard not to be inspired by reading Euripides at the actual Acropolis or Ovid in Rome. I was also just in the beginning stages of exploring polyamory and non-monogamy for myself, so the idea of having two soulmates was the starting place for The Promise of Lightning.

What was the inspiration behind The Promise of Lightning?
There were a lot of things that inspired me, honestly. I’m a hopeful romantic at heart, so I think the ideas of soulmates in fiction and in fanfiction really made me start considering how that would look in a modern world. I also wrote the first two chapters on a train ride from Rome to Florence while in Italy on spring break during my study abroad in Greece. So my Classics education and interest in reading mythology in its original languages were a huge part of inspiring the actual craft of my writing. It’s hard not to be inspired by reading Euripides at the actual Acropolis or Ovid in Rome. I was also just in the beginning stages of exploring polyamory and non-monogamy for myself, so the idea of having two soulmates was the starting place for The Promise of Lightning.

What two authors influenced your writing the most?
Formatively, Rick Riordan and L.J. Smith were huge influences on me. Both do an incredible job at merging magic into the real world and creating complex characters with individual motivations for the story. I’ve read Percy Jackson and The Night World series, respectively, probably a dozen times. To push the question a bit further, more recently, I’ve found that reading ancient authors have really influenced my writing in a more poetic sense – Sappho and Ovid, most predominantly.

Does sexuality play an important role in this story?
In a way, I wanted it to not be such an important part of the story. Love is love and I found a lot of solace in consuming content with queer relationships without having to worry about the consequences of homophobia. A great example of this is Schitt’s Creek. In a world where people are together because of the soul and not because of gender, I think normalising same-gender relationships was an essential part of world building for this universe.

What is your opinion on the current representation of polyamory within this genre?
Speaking from my own experience, I think a lot of representation comes in waves. I know, if I want good poly representation, I still often have to look for it in fanfiction before published works. But there has been so much progress lately and I’m really excited to see how much more progress is coming. I just hope the genre stays away from harmful aspects of polyamory like unicorn hunting (where heterosexual couples seek a bisexual woman to spice up their relationship through fetishising sexuality), because I think it’s caused a lot of problems for bisexual women, specifically, myself included. Any kind of representation, I think authors should do research before jumping into it, because there are real people and real communities out there who are living happy, polyamorous lives and we should treat it with respect.

Do you remember the first book you saw yourself in as a young reader?
I had a hard time even remembering a book or series that included queer female characters when I was a young reader. I read the Southern Vampire Mysteries by Charlaine Harris when I was in high school, so I think that was probably the first time, sexuality-wise. I’m genuinely so happy there are more options for young readers now.

The Promise of Lightning is now available in paperback and eBook on Amazon.co.uk.
The Rathbones Folio Prize: 2022 Shortlist Announced

By Caitlin Evans and Ellie Brady

A long-standing topic of controversy in the Prizes industry, and indeed the wider publishing world, is the rivalry between literary and commercial fiction. Oftentimes, what prestigious writers and institutions view as ‘good’ doesn’t align with the public consumer opinion and this has led to debates over the relevance of awards that celebrate only novels of ‘literary’ merit. The Rathbones Folio Prize was founded in direct response to this, hoping to lean more towards popular fiction than literary.

The Prize was established in 2014 and was sponsored by The Folio Society, for the first two years of operation but has since found a new self-sponsor in Rathbone Investment Management from 2017 to present. The prize is open to any work of literary merit. The Rathbones Folio Prize was founded in direct response to this, hoping to lean more towards popular fiction than literary.

The judging board is curated of Rathbones Folio Academy members and this year features, Tessa Hadley, Rachel Long and William Atkins.

The winning title for 2022 will be announced on 23 March, in a ceremony to be held at the British Library. Whilst we wait in anticipation of the announcement, view a brief synopsis of the shortlisted titles below:

**Natasha Brown, Assembly**

Brown’s best-selling debut manages to craft a powerfully moving narrative in a little over one hundred pages. Filled with sharp insights on the place of marginalised people in today’s post-colonial society, this word-of-mouth hit will certainly be in contention for this year’s top prize.

**Damon Galgut, The Promise**

Galgut’s latest novel is no stranger to award’s success having already won the prestigious 2021 Man Booker Prize. The narrative, following the dissolution of a white South African family in the Apartheid state follows the breaking of the novel’s titular promise is an unflinching exploration of the segregation and its impacts on society. Praised for its approach to form as well as subject matter, it is no surprise to see The Promise on this list.

**Selima Hill, Men Who Feed Pigeons**

This collection of seven poem sequences has already been shortlisted for the T.S. Elliot Prize and The Forward Prize alongside its inclusion on this list. Hill’s lively and uncomfortable examinations of the relationships between men and women have drawn praise from throughout the poetry community. The beautiful work has certainly earned its place amongst the more immediately recognisable and commercially successful novels.

**Philip Hoare, Albert and The Whale**

Philip Hoare brings a new form of narrative on the table of travel writing, set in the shores of New Zealand. He uses the elements of the travel writing genre like presenting dangerous adventure, unimaginable creatures and giants, but with a twist. The twist is that he unleashes the people from the past like Dürer, Martin Luther, David Bowie, Shakespeare, Thomas Mann and Blake to unravel a poignant relationship between Man and Animal.

**Claire Keegan, Small Things Like These**

Most of Keegan’s stories are based around a family. Small Things Like These follows the same trend with the protagonist being a father who has five daughters and a wife. However, what makes the book distinct from any of Keegan’s works is the brutal form of violence. The novella begins in a small Irish town - exploring the forms of violence preserved by the church.

**Gwendoline Riley, My Phantoms**

My Phantoms explores the emotional estrangement of a daughter from her separated parents. The parents maintained an orthodox loveless force over the female narrator, Bridget. The personal narrative goes on to deal with questions of financial security and unconditional obedience to a broken love. The impact of a broken family leaves Bridget empty with a loss of warmth.

**Sunjeev Sahota, China Room**

China Room is partly set in rural Punjab during the first half of the twentieth century, where young bride, Mehar, grapples with uncovering the identity of her newly-wedded husband. Adjacent to her narrative, is the story of a man in 1999 who travels to what was once Mehar’s family farm from London and who’s own experiences of racism, prejudice and cultural disconnections afford him strength through a period of self-searching rumination. Sahota has been lauded for his affecting prose that deftly examines generational trauma, making this beautiful and deeply human novel a prime candidate for the Rathbones Folio Prize.

Colm Tóibín, The Magician

Tóibín’s text has been shortlisted for the 2022 prize, and its ingenuity coupled with genuine readability makes it clear to see why. Irish author, Tóibín, employs the masterful and almost lyrical qualities of Irish literature to his exploration of the life of Thomas Mann. A man of endless intrigue – having lived through two world wars, fathered multiple children while keeping his homosexuality private and produced some of the most provoking and renowned works of European literature such as The Magic Mountain, Doctor Faustus and Tristan – Tóibín takes Mann as his muse in this profoundly readable literary work.
We were very keen to have people feel comfortable planning and making sure we spend time on contingency planning and making sure that continued challenges faced within the industry, we often do a lot of talking about this problem, but don’t take a lot of action. For this reason, instead of having specific panels focussed on diversity, we’ve worked with our inclusivity officer and have done our best to include a diverse range of speakers on every panel. We hope that in doing so we are being as inclusive as possible and we can generate discussion that is naturally diverse in thought and opinion. An issue we feel we wanted to address directly this year was gender discrimination in publishing. The panel “Our Generation” will tackle the continued challenges faced and what action we can take to improve things.”

Thank you so much for talking to us Susie! This conference will be an exciting addition to your calendar, whether you decide to turn up virtually, in-person, or both! You can buy tickets here from £15+. Limited free digital-only tickets for those from under-represented backgrounds or those whose income has been affected by the pandemic are available on a first come, first served basis. Please email sypscotlandconf@gmail.com to request these.

What are the events you are most looking forward to?

“We’ve done our best to think of panels from a broad cross-section of the publishing industry. These are aimed not just at publishing hopefuls, but those who have been in the industry for a number of years and are keen to explore other areas. From knowing your rights to spotting trends, the publishing landscape in Scotland to gender in the workplace and of course, we have something for everyone. We have some fantastic panelists lined up that we can’t wait to announce, but we’re really looking forward to welcoming our keynote speaker Amina Shah, National Librarian and Chief Executive of The National Library of Scotland and our first announced panel “Something to Scout About” which will delve into the mysterious roles of literary agents and scouts.

How has your team considered the topic of diversity within publishing?

“The lack of diversity within publishing is no secret. Within the industry, we often do a lot of talking about this problem, but don’t take a lot of action. For this reason, instead of having specific panels focussed on diversity, we’ve worked with our inclusivity officer and have done our best to include a diverse range of speakers on every panel. We hope that in doing so we are being as inclusive as possible and we can generate discussion that is naturally diverse in thought and opinion. An issue we feel we wanted to address directly this year was gender discrimination in publishing. The panel “Our Generation” will tackle the continued challenges faced and what action we can take to improve things.”

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Thank you so much for talking to us Susie! This conference will be an exciting addition to your calendar, whether you decide to turn up virtually, in-person, or both! You can buy tickets here from £15+. Limited free digital-only tickets for those from under-represented backgrounds or those whose income has been affected by the pandemic are available on a first come, first served basis. Please email sypscotlandconf@gmail.com to request these.
Not To Be Overlooked

BY EMMA WALLACE AND NATALIA ALVAREZ

Loizou and Marlaine Delargy (translated by Loizou) gives the story its narrative perception, but reveals a world that is so central to their social identities, as well as the risks inherent in supposedly giving birth during the Twelve Days of Christmas. They become, in essence, a fascinating window into a world steeped in age-old tradition and inherited superstition, a prism through which a broader array of stories, voices and ideas can be unearthed. Frequently shot through with a consistently believable sense of dread and terror, A Good Year is a haunting story about subjectivity and the ways in which fear and superstition affect our perception of events. Like many, I entered into this novel stubbornly determined to get answers like “Are the kalikantzari real and, if so, what do they want?” Over the course of this tantalisingly short story, Loizou converts this question into one more thought-provoking, not “Is the supernatural real?” but rather “Why does it seem real to these people? More particularly, what does this belief in decades-old myth and legend say about the society these people exist in?” By doing so, A Good Year not only reveals in the generative power of storytelling and narrative perception, but demonstrates how effective a multiform story can be.

Who doesn’t love an old lady with a secret? Maud in An Elderly Lady Must Not Be Crossed is an eighty-nine-year-old retired language professor turned travel junkie, who has a couple big ones she might just be cunning enough to keep safe. Told with quick wit about morally ambiguous decisions, this is a crime novel that is perfect for all. The short story collection was originally published in Swedish, then translated by Marlaine Delargy and released in 2021 through Soho Press. The compact pocket book includes 25S pages with six short stories that piece together our unreliable narrator Maud’s present-day life with significant moments in her past. The first story picks up five months after the events of An Elderly Lady Is Up To No Good, Helene Tursten’s first of this series, where in the final chapter a body is discovered in Maud’s apartment, ingeniously disguised as a break-in and theft gone wrong. While Maud is usually able to fool the police by feigning to be old and senile, notable detectives Irene Huss and Embla Nyström are not so willing to let their suspicions go.

This is the first time her old lady façade has not impressed investigators, who inconvenience her again when they show up right before she is set to go to her favourite travel destination, South Africa, for a last-minute Christmas getaway, asking more questions and insinuating that Maud knows more than she initially let on. Shaken by her encounter with the detectives, old memories resurface and more mysterious deaths—including that of her older sister Charlotte—are revealed. While the trip does wonders for Maud’s nerves, it seems she still can’t help intervening when she feels an injustice has been done. This leads to more cover-ups and an opportunity for Maud to live the rest of her days with somewhat of a family and the peace she has searched her whole life for.

I loved the conflict involved in this series and enjoyed getting to know Maud’s life and personality. She is a constantly confusing character, being at times both self-centred yet selfless given the right circumstances. She is always sure to keep readers guessing, but one thing about her never changes: she will do anything to live a nice, quiet life and anyone who gets in the way of this is sure to wish they hadn’t.

While this novel is second in its series, it can still be read as a standalone, though I would recommend picking up An Elderly Lady Is Up To No Good for the full experience and expect a third novel is already in the works. Happy reading!

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 reviews A Good Year by Polis Loizou and An Elderly Lady Must Not Be Crossed by Helene Tursten (translated by Marlaine Delargy).

A Good Year by Polis Loizou

The great power of storytelling, for me, has always been in those moments where the fragments of wider stories are gestured to, where characters and ideas appear, as it were, off-stage, standing for a world that exists beyond the remit of the narrator’s perspective. In Polis Loizou’s forthcoming A Good Year, it is this sense of a wider, off-stage world that gives the story its narrative power and ability to linger long in the mind.

Set in Cyprus in 1925 during the Twelve Days of Christmas, a period traditionally thought of by local folklore as a time where creatures known as kalikantzari come up from Hell to wreak havoc, A Good Year focuses on the consequences of isolation, superstition and fear on a young, recently married couple called Despo and Loukas. Paranoid, repressed and somewhat alien to one another, Despo and Loukas agonise over the pregnancy that is so central to their social identities, as well as the risks inherent in supposedly giving birth during the Twelve Days of Christmas.

Who doesn’t love an old lady with a secret? Maud in An Elderly Lady Must Not Be Crossed is an eighty-nine-year-old retired language professor turned travel junkie, who has a couple big ones she might just be cunning enough to keep safe. Told with quick wit about morally ambiguous decisions, this is a crime novel that is perfect for all. The short story collection was originally published in Swedish, then translated by Marlaine Delargy and released in 2021 through Soho Press. The compact pocket book includes 25S pages with six short stories that piece together our unreliable narrator Maud’s present-day life with significant moments in her past. The first story picks up five months after the events of An Elderly Lady Is Up To No Good, Helene Tursten’s first of this series, where in the final chapter a body is discovered in Maud’s apartment, ingeniously disguised as a break-in and theft gone wrong. While Maud is usually able to fool the police by feigning to be old and senile, notable detectives Irene Huss and Embla Nyström are not so willing to let their suspicions go.

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While this novel is second in its series, it can still be read as a standalone, though I would recommend picking up An Elderly Lady Is Up To No Good for the full experience and expect a third novel is already in the works. Happy reading!
What it means to be a woman is a very difficult concept to define, but our current and future achievements are often inspired by other women who stood up for what they believed in and championed themselves. International Women’s Day is the perfect time to reflect on the strong and bold women from the past, in our lives and in the books we read.

**Spinning Silver by Naomi Novik**

Whilst many fairy tales have an element of misogyny and sexism running through them, *Spinning Silver* is a fantasy novel loosely inspired by the tale of Rumpelstiltskin and in the books we read. Miryem, the daughter of a failed moneylender, perseveres to improve her family’s dire financial situation. However, her reputation for turning silver to gold attracts the attention of the king of the Staryk, icy fey creatures, who sets her an impossible task. Irina is a duke’s daughter and is married off to the Tsar who hides a dark secret that threatens both the human and Staryk world. And Wanda is a peasant from an abusive household who dreams of a better life.

Although the three women come from starkly different backgrounds, their fates are intertwined and both their strength and resilience are tested throughout the book. Novik explores themes of antisemitism, female courage and ingenuity as the women fight to save the kingdom. At the same time, these relatively ordinary women work to overcome their own personal obstacles and reclaim their own agency in a society that views women as a commodity.

**The Cancer Ladies’ Running Club by Josie Lloyd**

There are many reasons why Josie Lloyd’s *The Cancer Ladies’ Running Club* is amazing. Firstly, because it depicts a woman going through breast cancer in a way that is sensitive, uplifting and searingly honest throughout. It doesn’t shy away from the reality that being diagnosed and living with cancer creates, or the way it changes your life. It takes us through the hospital appointments, the treatment and the many turns in the cancer journey.

This is no doubt because the novel is inspired by events in Lloyd’s own life after she was invited to join a local running group for women facing cancer. Not only does *The Cancer Ladies’ Running Club* depict the strength of the main character to carry on running throughout her treatment (as Lloyd did), but it also shows the community of women that supported each other through one of the scariest times in their lives. It is testament to the notion that we are stronger together and that, with a community of people and a good chat, things can be just a little bit easier.

**The Pursuit of Love by Nancy Mitford**

This is a novel that shows courage and, even with all the adventures, it’s a great satire of aristocratic society with themes like marriage and war, and how finding a man wasn’t the ultimate purpose for women. In this, Linda followed what society told her to follow, but she ends up destroying all the aristocratic ideals, running away because she felt that was the way to find her dream. As Mitford herself says, “life is sometimes sad and often dull, but there are currants in the cake, and here is one of them.”

**The Book Thief by Markus Zusak**

Life can be full of situations where we become overwhelmed by all of it. In this novel by Markus Zusak, we meet Liesel during her life while World War II is happening. Of course, there are a lot of huge changes for everyone, but what makes Liesel special is that she doesn’t stick to what society establishes and she becomes a critical thinker through reading the books she saves from being burned. She has compassion for others and learns that words have an outstanding power – as demonstrated by its usage in Nazi propaganda. Through Liesel, *The Book Thief* shows the role that a woman can take when she stands up for her beliefs.
Upskilling Tips for Facebook

By Misha Manani and Tanvi Jaiswal

As one of the earliest social media platforms, Facebook has been the first of many groups being made by publishing enthusiasts. The publishing garner over 58k posts, while #bookworm has over 253k posts. Just like other platforms available, Facebook is another great source that can help and guide you when looking to expand your knowledge about the day-to-day updates within the industry. For this article, we have curated a list of the most useful courses, tips and accounts to follow, which can give you a head-start today!

Advice from the Upskilling Team

- **Join a publishing group:** Facebook is the place for support, encouragement and sharing your concerns. If none of the current groups suit your needs and interests, feel free to create one!

- **Follow and like public pages for publishing-related companies:** this will also allow you to see how social media posts adapt and differ across various platforms. This is particularly useful for those who want to work in editorial, marketing and communication roles.

- **Look out for publishing events on the menu tab:** you can search for publishing events and narrow down the location to see if there are events happening nearby. You can also see who is interested and who will be attending.

- **Check out the books, films and music marketplace:** see which books are being sold, what is trending and receive bargain deals. Add this to your shopping interests page on Facebook. Make sure you click on the notification and save button.

Groups to Join

Facebook has different groups for publishing hopefuls and employees. These are supportive and inspiring communities where people share industry insights, news and their personal experiences. Make sure you join today!

- **Publishing Hopefuls:** this is a popular Facebook group for those aspiring to break into the industry. Created by Christina Storey and Emma Ronan in April 2021, this is the virtual place to be. Every month there is a thread with a list of jobs, posts about events and those who have secured a job are even willing to share their experiences, CVs and cover letter templates.

- **US Publishing Hopefuls:** this was actually inspired by the UK version of the Publishing Hopefuls group above. For those of you who want to pursue publishing in the US, or have recently moved, this is the group for you, with jobs located in New York City, Boston and Chicago to name a few. They also share bookshop and book recommendations, and top tips for applications.

- **Assistant in Publishing:** once you have joined the publishing industry, the next step is progression. This group is created by Elizabeth Burrell, who is currently an Editorial Assistant at HarperCollins. It can be daunting when you first start your publishing journey, so this is a wonderful group to connect, rant and make friends. They even organise meetups, so join soon!

- **People of Colour in Publishing:** exclusively for those who work in the industry, from full-time, interning to freelance. The publishing sector is working towards increasing inclusivity in the workplace and ensuring that those from different backgrounds have an equal chance of getting a job. This is a good way to meet people in a similar boat.

Online Courses

- **Facebook Marketing Course:** it is designed for people who are looking to grow their business and its presence on Facebook. With a total of five lessons, it will teach you how to grow your Facebook reach, through paid and organic ways, and maximise your outreach to the audience. This comes with quizzes to test your knowledge. It is becoming a quick and efficient course for anyone who wants to start their professional journey in the publishing industry.

- **Facebook Advertising for Beginners:** this offers a guide into the basics of Facebook marketing, and teaches the preliminary stages of setting up and attracting your target audience. In addition, it also shows you how to use adverts as a way to increase traffic for your business and minimise the risk of getting your account banned. The course covers a large number of topics, such as Getting Ready to run Facebook Ad Campaigns, Customer Conversations and Defining Your Audience.

Thanks for reading Issue Forty-Two, the third article in our social media series! Join us again for Issue Forty-Three, the fourth instalment, where we will be covering Upskilling Tips for TikTok.
The Rise of the Short Collection

By Mary Karavel, Alexandra Constable, Aisling O’Mahony and Hayley Cadel

Though short stories have existed in oral form for centuries, it’s difficult to pinpoint exactly when they emerged in print. One of the earliest examples is the ancient Egyptian tale, The Shipwrecked Sailor, which dates back as far as 2000 BC. The earliest written collection of Aesop’s fables dates back to 400 BC. The earliest known collections of short stories as we know them today emerged in the Middle Ages. Short stories flourished during these periods, with numerous rules that each short story must comply with in order to go back in time and be published as a collection in 2015. The premise of the collection is incredibly unique: those who visit a mystical coffee shop in the backstreets of Tokyo and drink the coffee from a special seat can go back in time to see a loved one. However, there are numerous rules that each of the four customers must comply with in order to go back in time. The collection was so incredibly popular that Kawaguchi released a sequel entitled Before the Coffee Gets Cold: Tales from the Café. Other notable short story collections from recent years include Salt Slow by Julia Armfield, Grand Union by Zadie Smith and Sweet Home by Wendy Erskine. These collections are not just typical of fiction; we are also seeing their prominence in non-fiction. Collections of essays are being utilised to discuss a subject, whilst offering various perspectives on a topic, making them an effective way of promoting an intersectional approach. We see this across collections such as Gender Euphoria (edited by Laura Kate Dale), which discusses the joy of being trans, non-binary and intersex; Disability Visibility (edited by Alice Wong), which gives a voice to the disabled experience; and It’s Not About the Burqa (edited by Mariam Khan), in which Muslim women discuss their experiences to propel the conversation further than simply discussing the burqa. Several celebrities have tried their hand at writing short story collections. For example, Tom Hanks published his short-story collection, Uncommon Type, in 2017. The seventeen short stories cover a range of topics from immigration to divorce to bowling. James Franco’s anthology, Palo Alto, is a collection of stories about Californian teenagers struggling to fit in. The collection was later adapted into a film starring James Franco himself. Tim Burton has also published an anthology of short stories and poetry entitled The Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy & Other Stories. The collection has Burton’s typical macabre style and depicts a series of misfit children. Here are some short-story collections coming out in 2022 that we think you should keep your eye out for:

The first book we recommend is the debut collection We Move by Gurnaik Johal, which will be out in April. Mapping West London, Johal explores the interconnected lives of his characters from different generations and their attempts at connection through music, food, faith and family. In October, Graywolf Press is translating Manuel Muñoz’s collection The Consequences for a UK audience. The stories are set in California’s Central Valley in the 1980s and look at the violent and difficult challenges faced there, such as dealing with immigration officers, violence and class tensions. Archipelago Books is also translating Moldy Strawberries by Caio Fernando Abreu. The collection, originally written in Portuguese, consists of eighteen short stories set in Brazil during the 80s, when many suffered from military dictatorship and the AIDS epidemic.

With the emergence of Scratch Books, a short story publisher, publishing its first collection in March this year, the renaissance of short-story literature is far from over. Scratch Books will provide segments on its authors’ creative processes, giving its readers an insight into how each short story was formed and developed. Its first publication, Reverse Engineering, will be released in March and will feature seven stories by Jon McGregor, Sarah Hall, Chris Power, Irenosen Okojie, Jessie Greengrass, Joseph O’Neill and Mahreen Sohail. In our modern world of technological distractions and hectic schedules, the short story’s digestible and often more convenient presentation of prose fiction is sure to flourish within the publishing industry over the coming years.
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Editorial
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Clare Huxley
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