

Summer Books Preview



Taffy Brodesser-Akner, De'Shawn Charles Winslow, Sarah M. Broom, Linda Holmes, and Lisa Taddeo photographed exclusively for EW on May 13, 2019, in Los Angeles

First Time's the Charm

EW GATHERED THIS SUMMER'S HOTTEST DEBUT AUTHORS FOR A BRAINY, DISHY, VIBRANT CONVERSATION ON ALL THINGS LITERARY. MEET THE FUTURE OF BOOKS.

Written by David Canfield
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Photographs by Elisabeth Caren
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On a sunny May afternoon, EW's Los Angeles offices are catching literary fever. Five buzzy debut authors—Taffy Brodesser-Akner, 43; Sarah M. Broom, 39; Linda Holmes, 48; Lisa Taddeo, 39; and De'Shawn Charles Winslow, 39—have arrived, converging for their first major round of press.

The mood is excited, anxious, slightly overwhelming. The publishing world has changed hugely over the past decade, pronounced to be near-extinct more than a few times, only to find a post-Kindle (and Instagram-worthy) renaissance. And here are the people behind the stories affirming just how alive books remain, whether they're hitting the heart of our cultural moment, vitally reframing histories, or unfurling the kind of sparkling romance perfect for a lazy summer day.

Taking their seats on a cozy sectional, the writers discuss the cultural power of books, the struggle of becoming an author today, and how exactly to define a “beach read.”

Tell us a little bit about your books.

LINDA HOLMES *Evvie Drake Starts Over* is a book about a young widow. She has an apartment in the back of her house, which she rents out to a recently washed-up professional baseball player. It takes place in coastal Maine, so you get your small-town lobster community and lots of fun back-and-forth. It's a little romantic, a little fun.

TAFFY BRODESSER-AKNER *Fleishman Is in Trouble* is about a man who's recently divorced and starts dating for the first time through apps, and whose ex-wife drops his kids off for his weekend and then disappears.

LISA TADDEO *Three Women* is [a nonfiction book] about three women: their sexual desires and lives. One is a housewife in rural Indiana. One is a restaurateur in the Northeast whose husband likes to watch her have sex with other men and women. The last is a young woman in Fargo, N.D., who'd allegedly had a relationship with her teacher when she was underage; the trial has set their town upside down.

DE'SHAWN CHARLES WINSLOW *In West Mills* is about a woman named Knot who refuses to live her life based on societal norms. She has some addictions, she likes to read a lot. She has a well-meaning, meddling neighbor who just wants to fix her. We watch these two people grow and deal.

SARAH M. BROOM *The Yellow House* is about my growing up in New Orleans beyond the tourist map. I have 11 brothers and sisters; it's about this house that we grew up in, that my mother bought when she was 19 years old with her life savings. It tells the story of that house, what happened to the house, and our lives now.

What were your paths to getting these books published?

BROOM I started thinking about this book the moment I left the Yellow House for college in the '90s. I was haunted by the spectre of the house itself: In 2005,

Sarah M. Broom



Aug. 13

Did You Know? Broom's partner is Bessie and *Mudbound* director Dee Rees.



Broom and Taddeo

Hurricane Katrina happened, and then the house wasn't there anymore. I was writing now about absence. In 2011, I sold the proposal for the book; I

men and women, all kinds of people, but it became about female desire.

Lisa, you write, "As I began to write this book, I thought I'd be drawn to the stories

of men." Why did that change?

TADDEO I'd been writing for *Esquire* a lot. I was very in tune with this male audience. It was the opposite gender from mine, and I was intrigued by it. But then I started talking to a lot of men and actually moved to L.A. to profile one of them. There was a lot of ego involved. Not in all the men, but...women felt more complex and interesting.

BRODESSER-AKNER [Mine] was the same way: I thought I was interested in the story of a male divorce, but in the end I was interested in everyone's points of view.

HOLMES Lisa was talking about the difference in [how] men [and women] think and talk about desire. And one of



the things I really love about Taffy's book is that there are moments where it seems to be going in a direction of a book about the "American literary man." It has this wonderful turn in approach. There's a commonality in what you guys are talking about, in terms of whose POV people are interested in.

Sarah, in telling your family's story, do you fear how they'll react?

BROOM Absolutely. The entire act of being the baby child of 12 and telling this story felt like a major transgression. It took me a long time to give myself permission to [do so]. All of my siblings are alive; my mom is alive. I was approaching it in certain ways as a journalist would, trying to interview all of my family members and record them. That provided a level of detachment. But even now it's horrifying. I have dreams about it. The smallest thing can make someone uncomfortable. I'm trying to tell a story, which I think of as this epic, big story. But for me, the big thing was: I put myself on the line. I needed to put myself on the line, even more than I put anyone else on the line.

BRODESSER-AKNER Have they all read it?
BROOM No. They have not. I don't think they can read it before. I've read [my mom.] a lot of sections for fact-checking, and I'll give her, over the next few weeks, the entire thing. But having 12 voices saying "I don't like this" would drive me insane. [Laughs]

You're all entering the literary landscape. How does it look to you? Has it changed?

BRODESSER-AKNER The thing that we

forget very often right now is that this has always happened. There have always been distractions. The thing that I think is more crucial to the question than the political

landscape is technology—the amount that we're able to read and the amount that we are able to absorb right now. That's the thing that has made it hard in my magazine writing, but also in this novel—you have to work very hard to keep people's attention now, and you just have to be dancing in every sentence. If there's nothing that a new book can offer you, people are going to put it down because there's just too much to read.

WINSLOW I think the role of books is to teach and entertain at the same time. That can be done in a quiet way, and it can

be done in a busy way. But I don't think that books have an obligation to address the moment. I don't think [that] personally. But all writers do—but unintentionally.

BRODESSER-AKNER I agree with that. I don't know that the turns that Lisa and I took in our books would've happened in another time. We talk about masculine culture now. I think 10 years ago, I might've just been happy writing "the literary man."

Sarah, you mentioned telling a bigger story, too. The house, particularly, is such an iconic symbol of the American dream. What story did you find you were getting to?

BROOM From the place of the house, the story for me became about New Orleans and the way that New Orleans is mythologized—the way that people feel so deeply that they know it. Within the mythology of New Orleans, the actual people who make New Orleans the place that most people love are just completely out of the story. I saw the act of writing the book as [cartography]: reimagining, revising, expanding a map to include all the people I know, all the places I know that I never see on the literal and also theoretical map. This then became about America, and mapping in general, and meritocracy. What it means to have

Lisa Taddeo



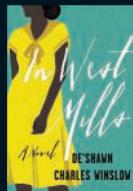
July 9

Did You Know? Taddeo's reporting for *Three Women* took a total of eight years.

Holmes and Winslow



De'Shawn Charles Winslow



June 4

Did You Know? Winslow was named a black male writer "for our time" by *T Magazine*.



Brodesser-Akner

built a house on sinking land: If the ground is poison, then where do we go?

Lisa, your book is landing in the post-#MeToo moment. How do you view this book in conversation with that?

TADDEO For Maggie, the young woman who had an alleged relationship with her teacher, if the trial had happened [now], I think it'd have gone a different way. For Lina, the woman in Indiana, a lot of people I spoke to in Indiana while Harvey Weinstein was going down had never heard of him. There's this chasm between the #MeToo movement and people who aren't on the coasts or in big cities. For Lina, in particular, her desire existed on its own.

Did you find, reporting it out, that as these things started happening, your sensibility about the book changed at all?

TADDEO Kind of. I don't know that I ever vacillated on how I felt. I always was like, "Women have to win." [Laughs]

Whom do you all consider influences?

WINSLOW When the film *Beloved* (1998)

came out, I had not read any of [Toni Morrison's] work. I went and saw the movie, and someone said, "Oh, you've got to read the book." I read the book, and I was a Toni Morrison addict. I watched [*The Color Purple*] growing up as a child. My cousins [and I] watched it over and over and memorized the lines. Finally, in my mid-20s, I read the book for the first time. Then I became addicted to Alice Walker's written work.

HOLMES I've read a lot of love stories that influenced the way that I wrote this. I'm a romantic-comedy fiend. Nora Ephron is one. The whole run of '90s rom-coms. I do also read books, I just want to say. [Laughs] Liz Gilbert is one, but also writers like Jennifer Weiner, Rainbow Rowell—people who write really good relationship stories that I like a lot have been very influential on my writing.

A few of you have written period pieces.

De'Shawn, yours spans decades. The dialogue reads so specific.

WINSLOW The dialogue and dialect were easy because I grew up hearing that sort of speech. Not so much now; but [growing] up, I didn't go to day cares—the day care was the old lady across the road or the old lady who babysat your mother. That's the way [they] spoke to me. And until I went to school, I spoke that way too.

Sarah, was it hard to learn about New Orleans East beyond your own experience?

BROOM Yes, really hard. Just finding people who wanted to talk about the history of this

place. No one [was] paying attention to New Orleans East. It never appeared in any of the narratives. But I'm always drawn to places like that, that no one is paying attention to—that are completely off the map. I

don't think of these people as voiceless at all. I think of centering their voices as they exist in my world, every single day.

HOLMES Listening to all these stories of how people write books—no matter what kind of book it is, they resonate with me in some way or another. When I was trying to talk about [beach reads], I'm like, "Why am I trying to explain 'This book is diverting and maybe Lisa's is less diverting?'" They're all books! Everybody writes thinking, "I have something I want to talk about and that I want to say, and I hope other people will be willing to listen."

Linda, your book naturally fits into the "beach read" category. What are your thoughts on the term?

HOLMES [Sometimes] those terms—[like "beach read"] or "chick lit"—are used in diminishing ways. When distinctions between what's literary and what's commercial are used like that, it's...worth having that argument. But for me personally? I'm extremely lucky to have written this book and published it. Read it at the beach. Read it in book club. Read it in the tub. Someone told me she read it in the tub. It made me so happy.

BRODESSER-AKNER I've never understood "beach read." I understand when it's used aggressively, but my tastes don't change at the beach. We never talk about the fact that everyone reads on the toilet. [Laughs] Like Linda, I don't care. Mostly, [the term] is being used to put my book on lists.

HOLMES I think sometimes it means slightly more diverting; I do think my book is more diverting than Lisa's book, for example. I can understand people thinking there's [a] valuable distinction between those things.

BRODESSER-AKNER I'd read it on the beach to distract me from the beach, because I don't like the beach and I love your book!

TADDEO I hate the beach.

BRODESSER-AKNER Tips for how to read beach reads if you don't like the beach.

HOLMES I don't like the beach either. I burn like a lobster.

Taffy Brodesser-Akner



June 18

Did You Know? She profiled Gwyneth Paltrow, Bradley Cooper, and more in 2018.

Linda Holmes

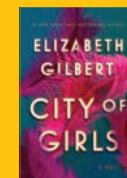


June 25

Did You Know? Holmes hosts the Pop Culture Happy Hour podcast on NPR.

This Season's 35 Hottest Reads

Illustrations by Stéphane Manel @stephanemanel



Elizabeth Gilbert

BY DAVID CANFIELD

City of Girls

JUNE 4

Elizabeth Gilbert still remembers the moment when *City of Girls* came together. She was interviewing a 95-year-old former showgirl, and the conversation took a turn. "I asked her, 'Do you ever regret never getting married?'" the author, 49, recalls. "She said, 'Who

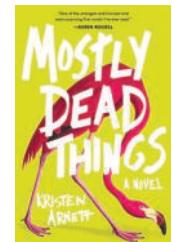
the hell wants to f--- the same man for 60 years?'"

Such unabashed, candid hilarity is embedded in Gilbert's delicious new novel. *City of Girls* immerses readers in the bustle of '40s New York, where 19-year-old Vivian Morris moves after getting kicked out of

college. She lands in the city's theater scene and meets an endlessly entertaining group of artists. "There's something about dipping into that world that was so exotic to me," says Gilbert, a New Yorker for 30-plus years. "I thought, 'Oh my God, New York City in the 1940s? I want to write about that!'"

The product of years of research, *Girls* gave the *Eat, Pray, Love* author the chance to have some fun. The dialogue crackles, the costumes receive lush descriptions, and the plot moves like a perfectly escapist romp. It's no wonder Gilbert calls *Girls* her "love letter" to the city she calls home. "Vivian's feelings about New York are exactly my feelings about New York—the place where she got to become herself," she says.

Gilbert may be best known for her best-selling memoirs, but here her knack for good old-fashioned storytelling is on full display. "I think of this book as a tray of champagne cocktails," she says. Cheers to that.



Mostly Dead Things

Kristen Arnett

JUNE 4

If you're in the market for a blackly comic and deeply weird Florida story, you're in luck: This debut finds aimless Jessa-Lynn taking over her father's taxi-dermy business after he kills himself in the shop. But no coming-home is complete without family resentments and secrets boiling to the surface. —David Canfield



On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous

Ocean Vuong

JUNE 4

An award-winning poet, Vuong can already count Marlon James, Celeste Ng, and Emma Straub among the fans of his wrenchingly powerful debut. *On Earth* is a novel about the power and limits of love, framed around the letter a queer man in his 20s writes to his mother, with whom he emigrated from Vietnam as a child. —DC



Jasmine Guillory

BY MAUREEN LEE LENKER

The Wedding Party

JULY 16

Since *The Wedding Date* first hit shelves almost a year and a half ago, Jasmine Guillory has become one of romance's brightest new voices. Her second book, *The Proposal*, was selected for Reese Witherspoon's Hello Sunshine book club in February and spent

more than a month on *The New York Times'* best-seller list. Now readers are invited to *The Wedding Party*, which introduces Maddie and Theo—best friends of *Date's* heroine, Alexa. When we meet the pair, they hate each other; after a one-night stand,

sparks fly. Their fling continues, but each agrees to an expiration date: Alexa's wedding.

Guillory, 43, who is known for her fizzy plotting and feel for sexual tension, is feted in the romance community for the way she's championed women of color as her heroines. "Black women tell me they've seen themselves in [my] books—they love the celebration of a black woman as a whole person, who loves her job and her family and finds love," the author says. "It makes me so happy."

Another thing that, unsurprisingly, makes her happy? Weddings. "You're bringing together all these people to announce this is the person you want for the rest of your life," she says. But they, as do Guillory's stories, also center on the power and beauty of female friendship. "Brides pick their [best friends] as bridesmaids. That's one of the great things about a wedding," she explains. "It celebrates the other women in your life." That's worth swooning over, too.

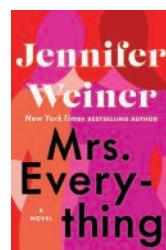


The Tenth Muse

Catherine Chung

JUNE 18

Chung (*Forgotten Country*) traces generations of female geniuses in her fascinating portrait of Katherine, a mathematician looking back at the obstacles she's faced in her career—as a woman of great ambition and intelligence pushing up against societal norms—and in her personal life, as she learns the truth about her mother and where she came from. —DC

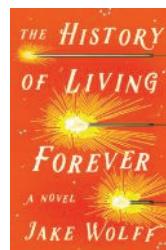


Mrs. Everything

Jennifer Weiner

JUNE 11

The best-selling author's latest, her most sprawling and intensely personal novel to date, attempts to answer the question "How should a woman be in the world?" It follows two sisters, Jo and Bethie, from their 1950s childhood to the present day, tackling racism, sexual identity, abuse, and how women are shaped—but not defined—by their choices. —CC

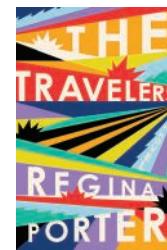


The History of Living Forever

Jake Wolff

JUNE 11

The mystical and the romantic combine for a love story that also confronts the meaning of life. After his chemistry teacher—and secret lover—Sammy Tampari dies, 16-year-old Conrad attempts to see the man's mission through: by creating a drug that extends the human life span. —Seija Rankin

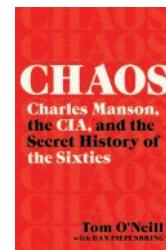


The Travelers

Regina Porter

JUNE 18

American history comes to vivid, engaging life in this tale of two interconnected families (one white, one black) that spans from the 1950s to Barack Obama's first year as president. The backdrop of events may be familiar (the Vietnam War, racial protests in the '60s), but the complex, beautifully drawn characters are unique—and indelible. —CC

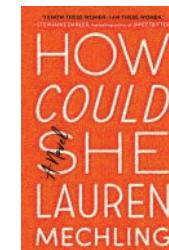


Chaos

Tom O'Neill with Dan Piepenbring

JUNE 25

What if everything we thought we knew about the Manson murders was wrong? O'Neill spent 20 years wrestling with that question, and *Chaos* is his final answer. Timed to the 50th anniversary of the Manson murders, it's a sweeping indictment of the Los Angeles justice system, with cover-ups reaching all the way up to the FBI and CIA. —SR



How Could She

Lauren Mechling

JUNE 25

Mechling (*Dream Girl*) gives the time-honored moving-to-New-York-City novel a refreshing update: failure. Three thirtysomething friends reckon with seemingly successful lives that aren't living up to expectations, thanks to mediocre apartments, marital strife, and the gradual dissolution of their chosen industry—print media. —SR



J. Ryan Stradal

BY SEIJA RANKIN

The Lager Queen of Minnesota

JULY 23

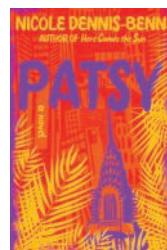
J. Ryan Stradal first bubbled to the surface in 2015 with his beloved, best-selling debut, *Kitchens of the Great Midwest*, a beautiful family saga that followed three generations of cooking habits. "I like to see how Midwesterners stand up to conflict," says the author, 43, who lives in Los Angeles but hails from hardy Minnesotan stock. "That's something I've been intrigued by since I was a kid."

Stradal's second novel, *The Lager Queen of Minnesota*, has similar selling points: complex female characters, sudden tragedies, culinary descriptions that awaken all your senses. But this family's legacy is rooted in beer, not lutefisk casseroles. Stradal was inspired by his first book

tour: He stopped in many small towns, all sporting big brewery businesses.

Lager Queen centers on two sisters whose childhood rivalry eventually spawns two competing beer ventures. Given this specific milieu (beer lovers take their industry seriously), Stradal did extensive research. He visited more than 30 brew operations, occasionally for casual research, other times in an official author capacity. One brewery in Hastings, Minn., even let him peek behind the scenes.

Though he's completed his yeasty tour, Stradal isn't quite the beer aficionado one might expect. "If I had my druthers, I'd probably have a Citra IPA," he says. "I know it's a normcore choice, but I'll own it."



Patsy

Nicole Dennis-Benn

JUNE 4

What does it mean to leave a child behind? Dennis-Benn follows up her acclaimed Jamaica-set debut, *Here Comes the Sun*, with *Patsy*, a pained look at the consequences faced by a Jamaican woman who abandons her family—including her young daughter, Tru—for the freedom of New York City, where she can pursue the woman she's fallen in love with. —DC

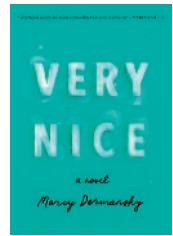


Bunny

Mona Awad

JUNE 11

A misfit MFA student at a thinly veiled New England Ivy (located in "a town named after a godly gesture of gratitude and fate") is seduced by a group of *Heathers*-esque classmates—they call one another "Bunny"—whose seeming attempts to foster creativity take a sinister turn. A surreal, darkly funny take on art, power, and female friendships. —Clarissa Cruz



Very Nice

Marcy Dermansky
JULY 2

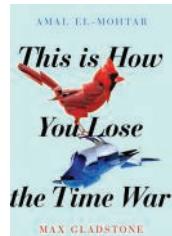
This darkly funny book vies to answer the age-old question: Just how huge is our collective appetite for tales of male novelists behaving badly? Dermansky (*Twins*) uproariously follows a Great Literary Man as he's seduced by his college pupil—and her recently divorced mother—against the backdrop of a wealthy Connecticut enclave. —SR



The Nickel Boys

Colson Whitehead
JULY 16

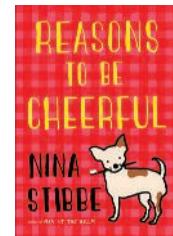
Whitehead won a Pulitzer Prize and a National Book Award for his previous novel, *The Underground Railroad*. In *The Nickel Boys* he returns to another pivotal, painful setting in American history: a reform school for boys in the Jim Crow-era South. The book should further cement Whitehead as one of his generation's best. —SR



This Is How You Lose the Time War

Amal El-Mohtar & Max Gladstone
JULY 16

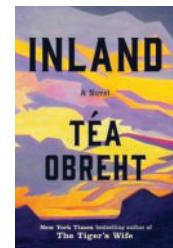
Sci-fi favorites El-Mohtar and Gladstone write alternating sections of this time-travel romance, centered on two agents on opposite sides of a vicious war who find themselves impossibly drawn to each other. Already optioned for TV, *Time War* intimately operates within an immersive space opera. —DC



Reasons to Be Cheerful

Nina Stibbe
JULY 23

The reliably hilarious Stibbe (*Paradise Lodge*) may have outdone herself with this witty, '80s England-set exploration of one woman's struggles in early adulthood. *Cheerful* just won the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize, the only U.K. literary award for comic literature, so dig into this one expecting a very good time. —DC



Inland

Téa Obreht
AUG. 13

Obreht's novels are capital-E Events—big, ambitious, provocative reading experiences. The man behind this season's splashiest screen-bound novel is experienced in this arena. Blake Crouch's books were the inspiration for TNT's Michelle Dockery vehicle *Good Behavior* and the M. Night Shyamalan-produced *Wayward Pines*. "But," says Crouch, "I haven't seen anything on par with the way people are responding to *Recursion*." A mind-bending thriller probing the power of memory as reality starts to (literally) crumble, *Recursion* (June 11) was acquired in a huge deal last October: Netflix announced that Shonda Rhimes and Matt Reeves would jointly adapt it—as both a movie and a series. "There are single sentences in the book that could be an entire season of television," Crouch says. "This isn't a two-hour movie, but it feels bigger than the small screen, too.... Netflix is breaking down the boundaries between film and television, and was sort of made for a book like this." Going a more traditional route is *The Warehouse* (Aug. 20) by Rob Hart, the author behind the Ash McKenna crime books. His new dystopian tale, which explores capitalism run amok, was acquired at auction in April 2018 by Ron Howard's Imagine Entertainment; Howard is expected to direct the film. "*Apollo 13* and *Backdraft* were two of my favorite movies when I was a kid," Hart says. "Ron Howard was one of the first directors that I could cite by name. All of these years later, for him to be interested in a book that I wrote? It's completely surreal." Finally, there's *FKA USA* (June 18)—an absurdist depiction of the U.S. on the verge of collapse, complete with talking goats and narcissistic billionaire presidents. (Maybe it isn't that absurd.) The novel was written over nearly a decade. "The satire has to be more than reality," says author Reed King. "I kept having to go back and change things!" Picked up by Warner Bros. in a pricey seven-figure deal, *FKA* is shrouded in mystery: King is the pseudonym of a best-selling author and TV writer. The author's identity may never be unveiled, but chances are he/she knows a thing or two about making the leap from page to screen.



Going Dutch

James Gregor
AUG. 20

Call this a comedy of manners for the (very) modern age. Set in the isolating vastness of New York City, *Going Dutch* develops a complex, unusual relationship between a struggling young gay writer and graduate student, the ebullient female classmate who yearns for his company, and an attractive lawyer who exhibits interest in both of them. —DC

Hollywood-Bound

THESE SCI-FI EPICS ARE ALREADY BEING ADAPTED FOR THE SCREEN, LONG BEFORE THEY HIT STORES THIS SUMMER. **By David Canfield**

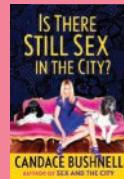
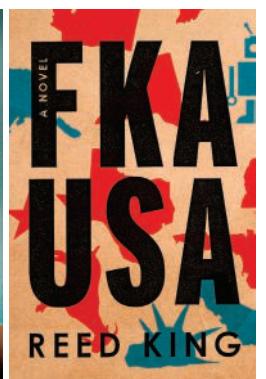
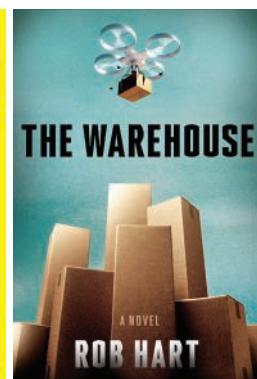
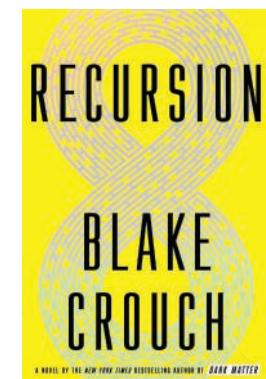
The future of book adaptations is looking bright—and, well, a little terrifying. Hollywood is hungry for speculative epics imagining alternate realities grim enough to shake your faith in humanity. How do we know? Some of this summer's biggest genre titles have been in development for months, well before film and TV executives could even take a look at a finished copy.

The man behind this season's splashiest screen-bound novel is experienced in this arena. Blake Crouch's books were the inspiration for TNT's Michelle Dockery vehicle *Good Behavior* and the M. Night Shyamalan-produced *Wayward Pines*. "But," says Crouch, "I haven't seen anything on par with the way people are responding to *Recursion*."

A mind-bending thriller probing the power of memory as reality starts to (literally) crumble, *Recursion* (June 11) was acquired in a huge deal last October: Netflix announced that Shonda Rhimes and Matt Reeves would jointly adapt it—as both a movie and a series. "There are single sentences in the book that could be an entire season of television," Crouch says. "This isn't a two-hour movie, but it feels bigger than the small screen, too.... Netflix is breaking down the boundaries between film and television, and was sort of made for a book like this."

Going a more traditional route is *The Warehouse* (Aug. 20) by Rob Hart, the author behind the Ash McKenna crime books. His new dystopian tale, which explores capitalism run amok, was acquired at auction in April 2018 by Ron Howard's Imagine Entertainment; Howard is expected to direct the film. "*Apollo 13* and *Backdraft* were two of my favorite movies when I was a kid," Hart says. "Ron Howard was one of the first directors that I could cite by name. All of these years later, for him to be interested in a book that I wrote? It's completely surreal."

Finally, there's *FKA USA* (June 18)—an absurdist depiction of the U.S. on the verge of collapse, complete with talking goats and narcissistic billionaire presidents. (Maybe it isn't that absurd.) The novel was written over nearly a decade. "The satire has to be more than reality," says author Reed King. "I kept having to go back and change things!" Picked up by Warner Bros. in a pricey seven-figure deal, *FKA* is shrouded in mystery: King is the pseudonym of a best-selling author and TV writer. The author's identity may never be unveiled, but chances are he/she knows a thing or two about making the leap from page to screen.



Candace Bushnell

BY CLARISSA CRUZ

Is There Still Sex in the City? AUG. 6

It's hard out there for a cougar. But for *Sex and the City* author Candace Bushnell, it's exactly the age when women need her the most.

"When I wrote *Sex and the City*, I was writing about single women in their 30s because there weren't supposed to be single women in their 30s—you're supposed to have figured it out," she says. Her latest, *Is There Still Sex in the City?*, addresses a different demo: women in their 50s and 60s who suddenly find themselves dating again. "This is another passage that nobody tells you about," says Bushnell, 60, who split from her husband, Charles Askegard, in 2011.

As with its predecessor, there is no shortage

of catchphrase-worthy sentiments—cubbing (when a woman dates a much younger man), MAM (Middle Age Madness), and the Mona Lisa treatment (we'll let you Google that one), among them. "This isn't your mother's middle age," says Bushnell, who is in a relationship with an MNB ("my new boyfriend!"). "This can be a time of rebirth."

Fittingly, the book has already been acquired by Paramount Television and Anonymous Content for development. While it's too soon to say whether TV lightning will strike twice, the author remains clear-eyed about matters of the heart. "I don't think I've ever considered myself a romantic," she says. "I am far too practical."