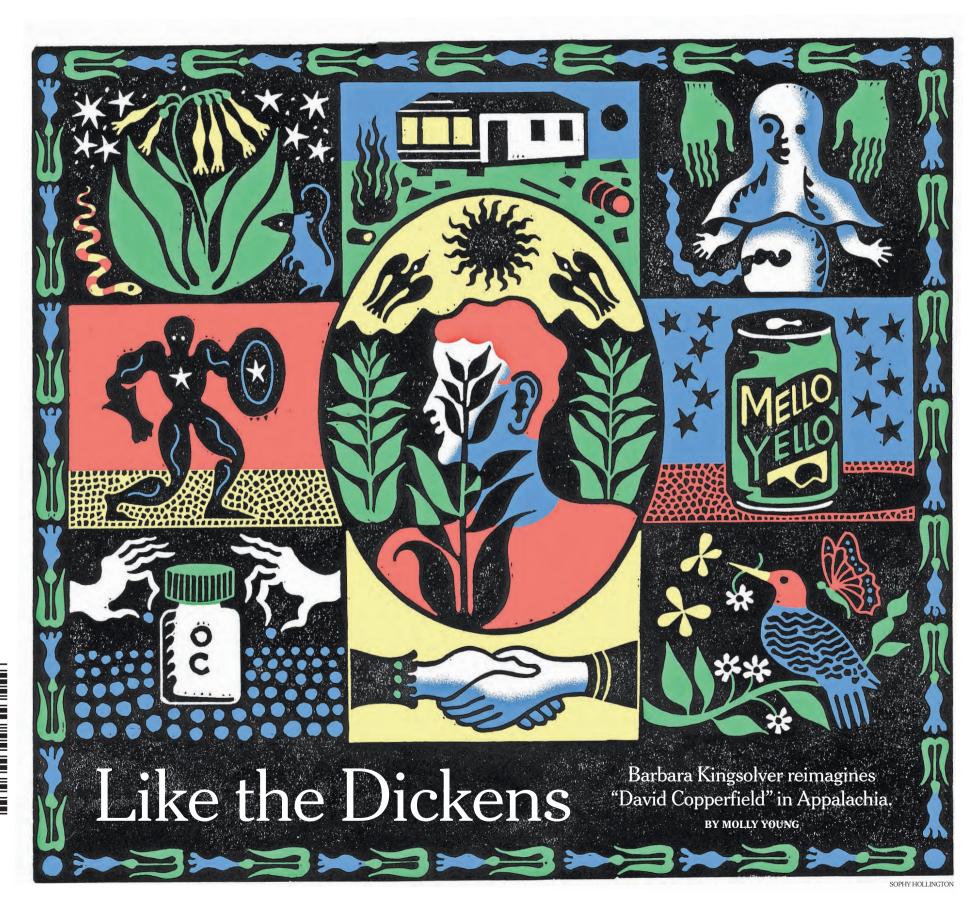
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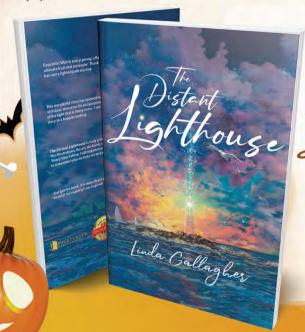
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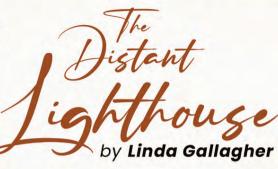
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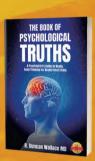
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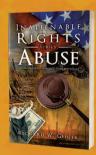
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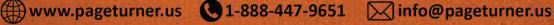
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The New York Times

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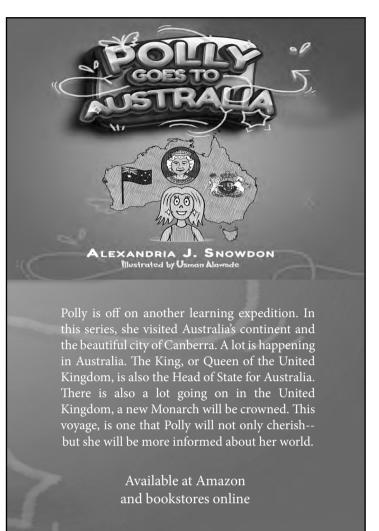
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☞ Letters



WILL SWEENE

A Terrific Cover

TO THE EDITOR:

Will Sweeney's hideous green monster holding up a Patriarchal cross on the Oct. 16 cover sure got my attention. It is ghoulish and frightening — and very appropriate as Halloween approaches. Loved it!

DAVID TULANIAN HENDERSON, NEV.

Family Ties

TO THE EDITOR:

Jeffrey Toobin's book review of "Morgenthau," by Andrew Meier (Oct. 23), suggests that the Morgenthau family has lost its role and interest in public life, writing that "the Boss [Robert Morgenthau] had seven children, but none have demonstrated interest in a public life, so the Morgenthau dynasty, if that's what it was, appears at an end."

As the niece of Robert M. Morgenthau, and granddaughter of Henry Morgenthau Jr., this came as a surprise to me. Although his children have not been directly involved in politics, they have long been interested in public service, including Robert's daughter, Jenny Morgenthau, who ran the Fresh Air Fund for many years. For my own part, when I read the review, I was literally completing my campaign as a candidate for Rhode Island's Second Congressional District. My campaign followed decades of work in government service, including senior posts in two Democratic administrations at the Peace Corps, the Department of Homeland Security and the Commerce Department.

While we make no claim to be a dynasty, public service has deep roots in our family and that carries on to the current generation and hopefully beyond.

Likewise, Toobin's characterization of my grandfather Henry Morgenthau Jr. as "academically hopeless," a "sycophant" and having only "a minor role in shaping the New Deal" does an injustice to a man who was an extraordinary leader, integral to recovery from the Great Depression and victory in World War II. As Treasury secretary, he advocated for a more progressive tax system, and for the rich to pay their fair share. Without his work to ensure Social Security's funding, the system could not have endured to this point.

While I understand that Toobin's and Meier's opinions of my family's legacy are their own, I am confident that current and future generations of my family will continue to carry on our commitment to public service. I also know that our country and the world are a little bit better off due to the contributions of the generation that went before us.

SARAH E. MORGENTHAU SAUNDERSTOWN, R.I.

BOOKS@NYTIMES.COM

WHAT OUR READERS ARE READING

Margot Clark, who is reading Julian Barnes's latest novel, **ELIZABETH FINCH**, called it a "jewel" and added, "Picked it up at my library, but I need to own this book."

Tom Healy has "been reading David Foster Wallace's INFINITE JEST since I received it as a gift last Christmas. I had discovered his collections of essays and was absolutely enamored with his writing — his style, his voice, his characterization, his ability to sound like he was just kind of accidentally bumming around while making incredibly erudite observations about everything that entered his senses. Of all the books I received at that time, it's the only one I've engaged with."

By the Book



Kevin Wilson

The author, whose new novel is 'Now Is Not the Time to Panic,' likes books that mix tenderness with weirdness, 'where freakishness isn't presented as something inhuman.

Describe your ideal reading experience (when, where, what, how).

Well, there really is nothing as lovely as reading to your kids, saying the words on the page out loud, your kid right next to you, both of you building the story in your head, imagining it in similar and different ways, until you're ready to drift off to sleep.

Otherwise, I'd choose a five-hour layover in the Raleigh-Durham Airport with a backpack full of books I've been wanting to read and candy bars, hiding in a corner of the airport where no one can see me.

What's your favorite book no one else

I worry that I'll mention a book and everyone will say, "Yeah, Kevin, we all read that book YEARS AGO." But one book I don't hear many people talk about is Gwendolyn MacEwen's "Julian the Magician," which is so singularly brilliant. Although mostly known for her

poetry, she published this novel when she was 22. (TWENTY-TWO!!!) Every single page of this odd, magical book has a line that will unnerve you or make you catch your breath. I was just completely hypnotized by it.

Do you count any books as guilty pleasures?

I would never count a book as a guilty pleasure, but the circumstances of when I read it might affect that. For instance, sometimes during Convocation or graduation at the university where I teach, we wear academic gowns to the chapel and sit for a few hours, and so I usually tuck a few issues of One Story in the sleeves of my gown and read them through the entire ceremony. I don't know if that's a guilty pleasure or just terrible manners.

Do you think any canonical books are widely misunderstood?

I honestly am not even sure what the

canonical books are or how they are typically understood or who it is that is misunderstanding them. I would say that most people overvalue their experience of reading a classic book when they were a teenager, either good or bad.

Which subjects do you wish more authors would write about?

Oh, that's hard to say. I find that I just want authors to write about their obsessions, the specificity of their own desires and concerns, and it's up to me as the reader to find my way through them. That said, if people want to write more books about women's basketball. professional wrestling, feral children, obsessive collections, secret underground rooms, then I'll be happy to read it.

What moves you most in a work of literature?

Weirdness mixed with tenderness. Moments where a little sliver of light appears, something that can help you find a way toward something better.

I tend to love books where freakishness isn't presented as something inhuman, but rather an affirmation of what it means to be a human being trying to survive in a very inhospitable world.

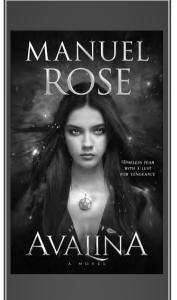
Disappointing, overrated, just not good: What book did you feel as if you were supposed to like, and didn't? Do you remember the last book you put down without finishing?

Do people answer this one? Yikes! I actually tend to like almost everything I read. I remember once I was in a bookstore with a friend and she'd point to a book and I'd say that I'd read it and she'd say, "Did you like?" and I would say, "Oh, yes, very much," and after about 10 minutes, she kind of shouted, "Is there any book that you've read and didn't like?" I thought for a bit and couldn't really come up with an answer. If I read a book, spend that much time with it, try to meet it on its terms, I usually find something that makes it worthwhile.

What books are you embarrassed not to have read yet?

I've read so little of the canonical great books that I've stopped feeling embarrassed about it. I've read a ton of books. I'm a lifelong reader. I'm doing just fine. \square

An expanded version of this interview is available at nytimes.com/books.



Timeless Fear with A Lust for Vengeance.

On the evening of an impending winter storm, in the quaint suburban town of Merryville, New York in February 1969, fifteen-yearold Avalina Bishop becomes the victim of a cruel and heinous crime committed by her best friend and four other classmates for being an alleged witch. What they don't know is that Avalina was given a special gift from her grandmother, who is a true witch from Salem, Massachusetts, enabling Avalina to walk the Earth once more. Over fifty years later, Avalina's soul is reawakened, but darkened by pure rage and an insatiable desire to smite all those who have wronged her. She embarks on a quest for revenge and begins possessing the bodies of young mortal women in an effort to carry out her own evil deeds. However, Avalina's plans frequently get derailed as she struggles to navigate a strange, new, digitaldriven world amidst a deadly pandemic; and ultimately, experiences sudden, first-time love and the belief in another chance at true happiness. However, Avalina discovers that the man she falls in love with has a ghastly secret of his own that could very well lead to her own demise, for their destinies are intertwined in far more ways than either of them could have ever imagined. Find out what happens in this new, mystical thriller by Manuel Rose.

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