

Orinda Books
Uplifting Books for Troubling Times
AAUW – April 28, 200

New Hardcover Titles

Redhead by the Side of the Road

Anne Tyler

Anne Tyler is always a pleasure to read. Her latest book, set in Baltimore, introduces Micah Mortimer, a self-employed tech expert (think Geek Squad) and manager of his apartment complex, has his orderly world thrown into disarray when his girlfriend is evicted from her apartment and a teenager shows up on his doorstep claiming to be his soon.

The Love Story of Missy Carmichael

Beth Morrey

The world has changed around seventy-nine-year-old librarian Millicent Carmichael, aka Missy. Where she once led a bustling life driven by two children, an accomplished and celebrated husband, and a Classics degree from Cambridge, she now spends her days sipping sherry and rattling around in her house. That is, until several perfect strangers and one spirited dog named Bob to break through her prickly exterior and give Missy reason to re-enter the world one muddy paw print at a time.

The Other Bennet Sister

Janice Hadlow

Mary, the bookish ugly duckling of Pride and Prejudice's five Bennet sisters, emerges from the shadows and transforms into a desired woman with choices of her own. What if Mary Bennet's life took a different path from that laid out for her in Pride and Prejudice? What if the frustrated intellectual of the Bennet family, the marginalized middle daughter, the plain girl who takes refuge in her books, eventually found the fulfillment enjoyed by her prettier, more confident sisters? This is the plot of The Other Bennet Sister, a debut novel with exactly the affection and authority to satisfy Jane Austen fans.

The Authenticity Project

Clare Pooley

Julian Jessop, an eccentric, lonely artist and septuagenarian believes that most people aren't really honest with each other. But what if they were? And so he writes—in a plain, green journal—the truth about his own life and leaves it in his local cafe. It's run by the incredibly tidy and efficient Monica, who furtively adds her own entry and leaves the book in the wine bar across the street. Before long, the others who find the green notebook add the truths about their own deepest selves—and soon find each other In Real Life at Monica's Cafe.

Rodham

Curtis Sittenfeld

From the *New York Times* bestselling author of *American Wife* and *Eligible*, a novel that imagines a deeply compelling what-might-have-been: What if Hillary Rodham *hadn't* married Bill Clinton? Curtis Sittenfeld re-imagines what would happen if Hillary Clinton followed a different path a didn't marry Bill. The book is described as brilliantly weaving actual historical events into a riveting fictional tale, Sittenfeld delivers an uncannily astute story for our times. In exploring the loneliness, moral ambivalence, and iron determination that characterize the quest for political power, as well as both the exhilaration and painful compromises demanded of female ambition in a world still mostly run by men, *Rodham* is a singular and unforgettable novel.

Always Home

Fanny Singer

A cookbook and culinary memoir about growing up as the daughter of chef/restaurateur Alice Waters: a story of food, family, and the need for beauty in all aspects of life. In this extraordinarily intimate portrait of her mother—and herself—Singer chronicles a unique world of food, wine, and travel; a world filled with colorful characters, mouth-watering traditions, and sumptuous feasts. Across dozens of vignettes with accompanying recipes, she shares the story of her own culinary coming of age and reveals a side of her legendary mother that has never been seen before. *Always Home* is a loving, often funny, unsentimental, and exquisitely written look at a life defined in so many ways by food, as well as the bond between mother and daughter.

Everything Beautiful in Its Time

Jenna Bush Hager

Jenna Bush Hager, the former first daughter and granddaughter, bestselling author, and co-anchor of the *Today* show, shares moving, funny stories about her beloved grandparents and the wisdom they passed on that has shaped her life. In this moving book, Jenna remembers the past, cherishes the present, and prepares for the future—providing a wealth of anecdotes and lessons for her own children and all of us. Poignant and humorous, intimate and sincere, *Everything Beautiful in Its Time* is a warm and wonderful celebration of the enduring power of family and an exploration of the things that truly matter most.

Pearls of Wisdom: Little Pieces of Advice That Go a Long Way

Barbara Bush

First Lady Barbara Bush was famous for handing out advice. From friends and family to heads of state and Supreme Court justices, and certainly to her staff, her advice ranged from what to wear, what to say or not say, and how to live your life. When she turned 80, she owned up to all her advice-giving and explained it this way: After all, in 80 years of living, I have survived 6 children, 17 grandchildren, 6 wars, a book by Kitty Kelly, two presidents, two governors, big Election Day wins

and big Election Day losses, and 61 years of marriage to a husband who keeps jumping out of perfectly good airplanes. So, it's just possible that along the way I've learned a thing or two. This is a compilation of Barbara Bush's trademark wit and thoughtfulness and a poignant reflection on life, love, family, and the world by one of America's most iconic public figures.

Paperbacks

A Well-Behaved Woman

Terese Anne Fowler

When Southern belle Alva Smith married William K. Vanderbilt she became the force behind one of the most influential dynasties of New York's Gilded Age. After the Civil War, young Alva Smith and her sisters are left with nothing but their good name. Then she is introduced to William Vanderbilt, whose nouveau riche family is upending established New York society. They marry, but find themselves excluded by the old-money doyennes who control access to the city's social and political scene. Refused entry, Alva designs and builds mansions and hosts her own grand balls. Denied a box seat at the Academy of Music, she helps found the Metropolitan Opera House. Outspoken, brave, and fiercely independent, Alva defies convention by championing suffrage for women, African-Americans and immigrants, and supporting labor union strikes. Set in Manhattan, Newport, and Paris, filled with glittering period detail and a cast of characters that includes the Astors, the Rothschilds, the Whitneys, the Belmonts, and other notable names from the era, *A Well Behaved Woman* tells the remarkable story of a woman who would not be denied.

Bookish Life of Nina Hill

Ali Waxman

This is a humorous and heartwarming novel of a confirmed introvert who dares to step outside her comfort zone. Nina Hill's life may not seem like much, but for a person battling anxiety, it's more than enough. She enjoys her job at a bookstore and her small circle of friends. Then all changes when a father she never knew leaves Nina a large sum of money. Suddenly she has innumerable sisters, brothers, nieces, nephews, and cousins all living within a twenty-mile radius, all demanding her attention. Everything is moving too fast for Nina. Caught in a whirlwind of new people, emotions and experiences, she feels the need to protect herself. But maybe opening her world—and her heart—is a risk worth taking.

Rules for Visiting

Jessica Frances Kane

May Attaway, a dry, witty, and unapologetic narrator, loves literature and her work as a botanist for the university in her hometown, where she lives with her elderly father and holds herself and everyone around her to exactingly high standards. More at home with plants than people, May begins to suspect she isn't very good at friendship, and she wonders if it's possible to improve with practice. Granted some

leave from her job, May sets out on a journey to spend time with four long-neglected friends. With simplicity and honesty, Kane has crafted an exquisite story about a woman finding a new way to be in the world. It's a beautiful contemplation of travel, trees, family and friendship, and it is the perfect antidote to our chaotic times.

Sourdough, or Lois and Her Adventures in the Underground Market
Robin Sloan

Lois Clary is a software engineer who codes all day and collapses at night, her human contact limited to the two brothers who run the neighborhood hole-in-the-wall from which she orders dinner every evening. When the brothers run into VISA issues they have to close their shop and they entrust Lois with their sourdough starter. She must keep it alive, they tell her—feed it daily, play it music, and learn to bake with it. And thus begins Lois's adventures in the world of San Francisco foodie culture.

Lager Queen of Minnesota
J Ryan Stradal

A love of beer ties this intergenerational story together as two estranged sisters take decidedly different paths after their father leaves the family form to the younger sister. With the proceeds from her inheritance, Helen goes on to build one of the most successful breweries in the country. Meanwhile, kindhearted older sibling Edith ekes out a living as a baker for the local nursing home. Edith's life changes when she unexpectedly is called upon to raise her only granddaughter, who also has a fondness for beer and works her way into the craft beer world where she earns a shot at learning the IPA business from the ground up—will that change their fortunes forever, and perhaps reunite her splintered family? This is a tender, big-hearted story with quirky characters.

Midnight at the Blackbird Café
Heather Webber

A captivating blend of magical realism, heartwarming romance, and small-town Southern charm. Nestled in the mountain shadows of Alabama lies the little town of Wicklow. It is here that Anna Kate has returned to bury her beloved Granny Zee, owner of the Blackbird Café. It was supposed to be a quick trip to close the café and settle her grandmother's estate, but despite her best intentions to avoid forming ties or even getting to know her father's side of the family, Anna Kate finds herself inexplicably drawn to the quirky Southern town her mother ran away from so many years ago, and the mysterious blackbird pie everybody can't stop talking about. This is lighthearted magical realism entered around food similar to *Chocolat*.

Life in the Garden
Penelope Lively

Penelope Lively takes up her key themes of time and memory, and her lifelong passions for art, literature, and gardening in this philosophical and poetic memoir. From the courtyards of her childhood home in Cairo to a family cottage in Somerset, to her own gardens in Oxford and London, Lively conducts an expert tour, taking us from Eden to Sissinghurst and into her own backyard, traversing the lives of writers like Virginia Woolf and Philip Larkin while imparting her own sly and spare wisdom. Now in her eighty-fourth year, Lively muses, "To garden is to elide past, present, and future; it is a defiance of time."

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