Inprint brings a literary who's who to Houston

By Maggie Galehouse

Vampires in a lemon grove. Life aboard an aircraft carrier. A sensitive man who's a lighting rod for psychic phenomena.

The 39th season of Inprint's Margaret Brooks Reading Series, which begins next month, will entertain these plots — and more.

For decades, Houston's literary nonprofit has brought a heady mix of esteemed writers to the city to read from their works and sit for candid, onstage interviews. Some are household names among the literary set; some aren't. Many are seasoned, with major book awards behind them; others are just beginning their careers.

Highlights of the upcoming season include David Mitchell, best known for his novel "The Cloud Atlas," Michael Cunningham, author of "The Hours," and Kazuo Ishiguro, of "Remains of the Day." Ishiguro, who will read from "The Buried Giant," his first novel in 10 years, appears in March 2016 as part of his book tour. Catching authors on tour is one way to lure big names, but Inprint also will pay a premium for talent. The most the nonprofit has paid an individual author is $25,000, says Bob Levy, Inprint's executive director. Amy Tan, Tony Kushner and Margaret Atwood have been the highest-paid guests.

Authors continue on G2
Debut novel is a literary beach read that everyone should enjoy

By Porter Shreve

Courtney Maum's first novel, "I Am Having So Much Fun Without You," is a supernatural comedy. Its snappy title promises a light novel, but don't let the word "supernatural" make you think this is a novel you'd read by the pool, either. On the contrary, this is a beach read—ab ook that may help you escape the hassle of everyday life.

The novel opens with a young woman named Anna Laren, who has just ended her relationship with her husband, Robert. Anna is a writer, but she isn't particularly successful. She spends her days sitting in front of her computer, typing away, trying to come up with the next great novel. But the truth is, she's not very good at writing. She's always struggled with writer's block, and she's never quite been able to put her ideas onto paper.

The problem is that Anna's husband is a successful novelist. He's written several best-selling books, and he's always been able to find inspiration. But Anna is struggling. She feels like she's running out of time. She's 35 years old, and she knows that if she doesn't find success soon, she'll be left behind. She's not sure if she can write a novel like her husband's. She's not sure if she can be a successful writer.

But then she meets a mysterious man. He's a writer, too, and he's been through the same struggles that Anna has. He tells her that she doesn't need to be successful. He tells her that she doesn't need to write a novel like her husband's. He tells her that she just needs to write a novel that's true to herself.

And so Anna starts writing. She writes about her life, and she writes about her relationships. She writes about the things that she loves and the things that she hates. She writes about the people who please her, and the people who frustrate her.

And as she writes, she begins to find her voice. She begins to find her own style. She begins to find her own talent. And as she finds her voice, she begins to find her confidence. She begins to believe that she can write a novel that's true to herself. And she begins to believe that she can be a successful writer.

The first third of the novel is a study of Anna's life. She's a writer, and she's always struggled with writer's block. She's always struggled with finding inspiration. But as she writes, she begins to find her voice. She begins to find her confidence. She begins to believe that she can write a novel that's true to herself.

And then the second third of the novel kicks in. Anna's husband, Robert, has just been killed in a car crash. Anna is shocked and devastated. She's not sure how she's going to survive without him.

But then she meets a mysterious man. He's a writer, too, and he's been through the same struggles that Anna has. He tells her that she doesn't need to be successful. He tells her that she doesn't need to write a novel like her husband's. He tells her that she just needs to write a novel that's true to herself.

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And so Anna writes. She writes about her past. She writes about her present. She writes about her future. She writes about her love. She writes about her loss.

And as she writes, she begins to find her voice. She begins to find her confidence. She begins to believe that she can write a novel that's true to herself. And she begins to believe that she can be a successful writer.

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Celebrity authors with Hollywood cred heading to Houston: This new Inprint schedule is star studded

BY TARRA GAINES  8.17.14 | 1:28 pm

Every spring when Inprint, Houston's foremost literary arts organization, begins looking for authors for the next season of the Inprint Margaret Root Brown Reading Series, executive director, Rich Levy, says they have one, main objective: "To get the best possible writers and to get a mix of genre, style, ethnic backgrounds."

But sometimes, mostly accidentally as the season begins to form, some themes become apparent.

This year after getting a look at the stellar selection of authors, I noticed that the 2014-2015 season appears positively cinematic, thanks mostly to three literary stars: David Mitchell, Michael Cunningham, and Kazuo Ishiguro.

While it's not unusual for a lineup to include one or maybe two authors who have a novel or short story adapted as movies, these three have a combined eight films with their name on them, either because the film was inspired by one of their best-selling works, like Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*, Cunningham's *The Hours* and *A Home at the End of the World* and Ishiguro's *Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go*, or in the case of Ishiguro and...
Cunningham they’ve also tried their hand at screenwriting.

Viewing this impressive list of award winning novels adapted into Oscar nominated and winning films made me realize how much cinema spring from books, but also wonder what the allure is for movie directors. I thought perhaps Levy, who is also on the Museum of Fine Arts film committee, might give me some perspective.

Team Book vs. Team Film
When it comes to film adaptations, Levy is not surprisingly on Team Book, arguing: “Usually, the film versions of books are not satisfying for people who love the books,” but he also thinks the stories in books can be great inspiration for filmmakers.

He does note that there are some great films out there that have introduced a novel to a new audience and that book and film can “coexist pretty nicely.”

“I don’t think film makers necessarily want to redo what’s been done on the page, and they can’t. But then they can bring it to life in a way the writer only has words to work with,” he says.

After discussing what filmmakers get out of using a novel as a source for a movie — an already proven good story that probably got under the filmmaker’s skin — I asked what’s in it for writers like Cunningham, Mitchell and Ishiguro.

Money, of course, was Levy’s first answer. A film version of an author’s novel can certainly give the writer the monetary space and time to work on the next novel. But Levy, a poet in his own right, moves on from the practical to the artistic.

“I think it’s probably very interesting to see how this thing — that came out of your head, that you invented and then put down on the page in words — how someone is going to create a two dimensional version of that,” he muses. “That must be a surreal and marvelous experience, if you can let go the fact that it’s no longer yours.”

So what will be the next great novel enticing filmmakers to bring it to the screen? Could it be Mitchell’s The Bone Clocks, which he’ll be reading to Houston audiences on Sept. 21, only a few weeks after it debuts? Maybe they’ll feel a chill from Cunningham’s The Snow Queen, like Houston fans undoubtedly will on Nov. 10.

Is Ishiguro’s first novel in a decade, The Buried Giant, which he reads on March 23, the one? Or perhaps it will be Karen Russell, reading on Jan. 26, whose Swamplandia came close to being the next big HBO series.

Still, we can’t count out the other highlights of the season.

A Celebration of the Short Story on Oct. 13
One of the greats of the short story form, Deborah Eisenberg, and UH’s own Antonya Nelson, whose latest collection Funny Once just came out this summer help us remember some tales are best told in bite sized pieces.

One (actually two) for the poetry lovers on Feb. 23
As a reminder that we don’t have to wait for April to celebrate poetry, Imprint presents 2013 National Book Award winner Mary Szybist and National Book Award finalist Kevin Young.

Up and Coming Voices on April 20
Cristina Henriquez and Marlin James are telling vastly different stories in their new novels. Henriquez’s The Book of Unknown Americans gives readers distinctive and timely stories of immigrants. James’s A Brief History of Seven Killings recalls the 1976 attempted assassination of Bob Marley.

But both juggle numerous narrators in order to give us multiple points of view into these worlds.

Nonfiction Takes a Bow on May 11
To sail the season into the sunset, celebrated essayist Geoff Dyer will read from his Another Great Day at Sea, a chronicling of his two weeks with the men and women aboard the aircraft carrier the USS George H.W. Bush. Imprint has frequently brought nonfiction giants to the stage, but they’re now making an effort to have a creative nonfiction night every year, bringing “memoirist, a lot writers who, like Dyer, are not afraid to insert themselves in the work.”

The season brings many new worlds to explore and a multitude of new voices, real and imaginary, so enjoy immersing yourself, while knowing that there’s probably a director out there reading with you, wondering if there’s another Oscar in here for Meryl Streep.
**The Bone Clocks**

By David Mitchell

Launched on July 8, 2014, "The Bone Clocks" has climbed to number eight on the New York Times best-seller list its first week out. "The Bone Clocks" is Mitchell's sixth novel. He launched it today at the Wortham Theater Center's leadoff summer event of the Inprint Margaret Root Brown Reading Series. Tickets are $5. Information: inprinthouston.org.

Mitchell is a major character in "The Bone Clocks." Among this latter group of bodies— innate, not so usual) Tobias Smollett. ("He's quite rude and quite funny. Quite Smollet.").

**BOOK EVENTS**

**Monday, September 22**

**Francois Morellet: White Noise**

6:30 p.m., South Houston High, 1302 Heights, 832-393-1810 or hmns.org.

**Tuesday, September 23**

**Barbara Barnes Sims**

Author will discuss and sign "Love Me Back," 7-9 p.m., Blue Willow Bookshop, 14532 Memorial; 281-497-8675 or bluewillowbooks.com.

**Wednesday, September 24**

**WeCare About Nature?**

6:30 p.m., Houston Museum of Natural Science, 5500 Hermann Dr. 713-524-8597, or toll-free 888-362-5717.

**Thursday, September 25**

**Margaret Bryant**

Author will discuss and sign "Tracks and Shadows: Field Notes," 7-8 p.m. at Blue Willow Bookshop.

**Friday, September 26**

**Ivan Sandrof Lifetime Achievement Award**

6:45 p.m., Blue Willow Bookshop.

**Saturday, September 27**

**WeCare About Nature?**

6:30 p.m., Blue Willow Bookshop.

**Sunday, September 28**

**Children's Literature Reading Series**

11 a.m., South Houston High, 1302 Heights, 832-393-1810 or hmns.org.

By Maggie Gallagher

On the phone from D.C., David Mitchell is pleasant. Chairy.

Branches from his books—"Cloud Atlas" and "The Thousand Jacob de Zoet" among them—that this is a man with expansive ideas, a grand imagination. His plots cross time and space, soaring with speculations (and judgments) on love, memory, technology, evolution, consumption, race, gender, even the transmigration of souls. In conversation, I've had a similar omniousness, as if he didn't want it to coalesce into either question or story.

When asked which books and authors influenced him—a stall enough question, but one that can be fruitful—I was surprised to learn he had set a total cut-out and then hacked it off with a double negative.

In his 20s, he says, he enjoyed the "social." At 30, he read Lightboxers by House. Milan Kundera. Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Gunter Grass and (he notes)销售 Tobin Smollett. ("He's quite rude and quite funny. Quite Smollet.").

It's hard to imagine influences.

Now, 49 years after, he is still writing and reading to entertain. "To what degree is it written today how you are? I'm not really sure that this list is not representative."

Mitchell, at 49, "though I feel about 40," is in the middle of a book tour now—"In the Houston bookstore to read and begin the novel, "The Bone Clocks,"" currently No. 3 on the New York Times best-seller list. His appearance launches the 36th season of Inprint's Margaret Root Brown Reading Series.

Like earlier works, "The Bone Clocks"—a reference to our natural bodies—is a time- traveling superhuman saga, in this instance propelling two groups of immortals against each other. Forces extend their lives, and another book of sorts, naturally inhabit new bodies. The book shows current bodies expire. Among this latter group of bodies—innate, not so usual) Tobias Smollett. ("He's quite rude and quite funny. Quite Smollet.").

His appearance marks the start of "Holly's middle of a book tour." He already is working on his next book. "I'm trying out some ideas that didn't make it in "The Bone Clocks."" Mitchell explains. "It would be supernatural again. Marvellus will be heard."

Because Mitchell's stories are so detailed, thin with symbols and processes that could be丝毫细小的 attention, I ask if he has groupies akin to Tolkien—readers who really get into the minutiae. "But groupies" is the wrong word.

"Sounds a bit conducive," he half- jokes. "I mean you could try to be hyper attentive readers. If you did that, well, call them. Yeah. I just did a question and answer on Reddit and some people must have spent their time corresponding with me. Sometimes I do have conversations with that level of fine detail. You don't have to get all the details to get pleasure from the books, but people who are interested in details...I just tell them for people who never really decided to be a writer."

"I would have, should have, visceral fantasies—imagine my name on the cover of a book— but that's what i was young," Mitchell says.

"I don't think i ever did much for a writer. And it's probably not something i might like to try."

**"The Bone Clocks"**

**By David Mitchell

Houston Chronicle | HoustonChronicle.com and chron.com | Sunday, September 21, 2014 | 00:00:00

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"The Bone Clocks" has climbed to number eight on the New York Times best-seller list its first week out. "The Bone Clocks" is Mitchell's sixth novel. He launched it today at the Wortham Theater Center's leadoff summer event of the Inprint Margaret Root Brown Reading Series. Tickets are $5. Information: inprinthouston.org.

**Mitchell**

is not imminent on the horizon. He is there in the future and in your back and to your shortness of breath when you take the stairs instead of the elevator.

"But would you be prepared to pay to cheat this process if you could keep your youth, your health, your looks, and this bottomless wealth of time?"

And Mitchell says, when he shows the different stages in Holly's life, he must show the world, as well. That allows him to slip from the Swiss Alps to the Australian bush, from the world we know to a world we can only imagine.

By the end of "The Bone Clocks," we have a transfigured society now taken for granted—connectivity, technology, abundant food from anywhere around the globe— is this becoming a distant memory. As one of Mitchell's characters has predicted, the future looks a lot like the past.

**Author appearance**

July 8-1302 Heights, 832-393-1810 or hmns.org.

**Author will discuss and sign "The Darkest of Sunlight," Noon-8:30 p.m. at the Central Library, 530 Main, 713-867-9887 or hmns.org.

**Author will discuss and sign "The Happening Dahlias," Noon-8:30 p.m. at the Central Library, 530 Main, 713-867-9887 or hmns.org.

**Author will discuss and sign "Tracks and Shadows: Field Notes," Noon-8:30 p.m. at the Central Library, 530 Main, 713-867-9887 or hmns.org.

**Author will discuss and sign "The Silver Hoard," Noon-8:30 p.m. at the Central Library, 530 Main, 713-867-9887 or hmns.org.

**Author will discuss and sign "Love Me Back," Noon-8:30 p.m. at the Central Library, 530 Main, 713-867-9887 or hmns.org.

**Author will discuss and sign "To Do Well in School," Noon-8:30 p.m. at the Central Library, 530 Main, 713-867-9887 or hmns.org.

**Author will discuss and sign "WeCare About Nature?" 6:30 p.m., Houston Museum of Natural Science, 5500 Hermann Dr. 713-524-8597, or toll-free 888-362-5717.

**Author will discuss and sign "The Bone Clocks," 6:30 p.m., Blue Willow Bookshop.
The author as God: In trippy interview, best-selling novelist David Mitchell reimagines the universe

BY TARRA GAINES  9.20.14 | 9:27 am

Warning: Buckle up your brain because this interview gets trippy.

In acclaimed author, and Inprint 2014-2015 season opener, David Mitchell’s 2001 novel *number9dream* the protagonist describes a movie he’s watching. In the film *within the novel*, a psychiatrist is asked by a prison warden to assess the...
sanity of an inmate, named Voorman, who claims to be God. Voorman is worshipped by the other prisoners and is quite content behind bars, snug in a straightjacket, maintaining this universe he proclaims he called into being nine days previously. Within a day he has the psychiatrist doubting his own sanity.

Stay with me, because real life gets as weird as fiction. While no film director has attempted adapting number9dream for screen — unlike Mitchell’s time and space jaunting novel Cloud Atlas — this snippet of a movie summary inside number9dream has been turned into an Oscar nominated short film, The Voorman Problem, starring everybody’s favorite Holmes sidekick and Hobbit, Martin Freeman.

Now David Mitchell’s latest epic The Bone Clocks has been released, and in one of the six novella sections that create the novel, readers meet the character Crispin Hershey, an author once the darling of the literati, now soon-to-be has-been, who in his youth wrote a stunning short story titled...The Voorman Problem.

Which is the real Voorman?

When I got to speak to Mitchell recently before his trip to Houston for the Inprint Margaret Root Brown Reading Series Sunday night, I asked him if he would help me separate this tangle of fiction, film, reality and imagination all making claim on the same material: God imagining the world into being from a prison cell.

And so I went straight to accusation: Does this make you Voorman?

“It’s a nice knot, isn’t it?” said with a chuckle was Mitchell’s oh so unhelpful answer.

And so I went straight to accusation: Does this make you Voorman?

“Does this make me Voorman? Well, all novelists are Voorman, and all artists are Voorman, and Voorman is all artists.” Mitchell added a spooky “Oooohh” to the end of his statement made even funnier to American ears when said with a quiet,

A connected world

This is the kind of “what is fiction?” “what is reality?” rabbit hole readers willingly dive into when they read a Mitchell novel and especially if they read more than one. There’s been quite a lot of sifting through his work by critics and fans looking for connections between his worlds. Those connections are there and real because Mitchell is on his way to creating a kind of career spanning fictive universe, an “Über-novel” as he calls it.

And how does he organize this galaxy of characters, who might literally span a literary galaxy?

“I don’t really,” he admits. “I go back and see what they [the characters] were doing and who they were and their original carnations and incarnations in previous books, and if I think they’ll fit the job then I’ll reemploy them in a different phase of their life and often in a different area of the world in the uber-novel.”

He admits it might be better if he was the kind of author who could connect plots, characters and books as lines on “a massive corkboard,” but he says, “I’m happy for it to come along nicely without me looking at it.”

The Bone Clocks, the latest novel within the Uber, spans the life of one English girl, Holly Sykes, but takes detours across a millennium. Each of the six novella sized sections sends readers into a new decade, inside the head of a new narrator and many times into a new genre: a runaway girl story, a privileged man’s Faustian bargain, a Hemingway-esque war correspondent’s tale, a satire on the writing life.

This change in narrator and genre “make the six novella distinct and gives them their own flavors and textures,” Mitchell explains. And those disparate genres remarkably build into a fantasy/sci-fi battle between good and evil, until it all falls

promo ALERT Movie at Market Square Park: The Big Chill
Crowd sourcing

Hidden away within these stories are connections to many of this other works. I asked Mitchell what happens if, as his readership grows as big as his uber-universe and fans begin to comb through his work for those connections they find inconsistencies, because let’s face it that’s what fans do best.

Mitchell seems cheerful at the prospect. If readers are fans enough to find contradictions, that’s less organizing work for him and he can fix them in the next work. “The supervision and management and sort of time lord-ship of the Uber-novel gets crowd sourced out,” he says.

With Imprint having it’s most cinematic season, I couldn’t end our talk until I asked Mitchell how he braved that other knot of fiction, film, and shared realities, the movie Cloud Atlas.

Mitchell knows this is a story that doesn’t always have a happy ending for an author.

“What you then feel depends on whether you’re happy or not with the film. If you think it sucks, it would be most wonderful that it’s happened, then horrendous and mortifying. You should get a sense of what the director really wants to do with it from their past record and from talking with them. That’s your responsibly... No one forces you to sign the options papers at gunpoint,” he says, but in his case he was very glad it happened.

“It’s quite metaphysically interesting, I suppose, to have something from your imagination then appear 10-foot high on the screen of a multiplex. Yeah, it’s quite a kick,” he concluded.

David Mitchell opens the 2014-2015 Imprint Margaret Root Brown Reading Series on Sunday, Sept. 21 at 7:30 p.m. in Cullen Theater at the Wortham Theater Center.
AUTHOR Q&A
Eisenberg on Eisenberg
By Maggie Galehouse

In conversation, Deborah Eisenberg speaks slowly and deliberately, often in complex sentences.

Her short fiction reads like her conversation sounds, as if she had circled back once, twice, several times to revisit each word, taking care to express herself precisely. Intimately. As if the writing itself was a form of thinking.

The best short-story writers are masters of compression, packing a lifetime's worth of baggage into one small carry-on. Eisenberg, who appears in Houston on Monday as part of the Margaret Root Brown Reading Series, is among the best of a small cadre of short-fiction writers that includes Alice Munro, George Saunders, Charles Baxter and Antonya Nelson. Nelson, who teaches at the University of Houston's creative writing program, will share the stage with Eisenberg on Monday.

Eisenberg continues on G2

Author appearance
Deborah Eisenberg and Antonya Nelson will read from their works as part of the Inprint Margaret Root Brown Reading Series.

When: 7:30 p.m. Monday, Where: Wortham Theater Center, 501 Texas.
Cost: $5; doors open 6:45 p.m.
Information: inprinethouston.org.
Catastrophic Theatre cancels permits

Catastrophic Theatre director Jason Noolder has can- cancels permits for the company's 2014-15 season at the Barn Village Theatre. The company previously announced plans to open Oct. 16 at Holiday Inn (formerly Barnevelder), which was to be the world premiere of Noolder's "American Falls," which was being rescheduled for a later time because of chronic Lyme disease, according to a statement from the company. The show was to be "The Blackest Sun," which was to premiere later this fall. The company also is making changes — but in this case, the production will be re- scheduled. The "Blackest Sun: An Adventure of Sherlock Holmes," which was to begin Oct. 15, is being postponed.

Catastrophic Theatre holds permit for "American Falls"

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Eisenberg sings she's catching up on hundreds of years of reading

Deborah Eisenberg celebrated with partner Wallace Shawn for winning the 2013 Proustian Award for Fiction. For "The Designated Mourner," one of her most famous stories, Eisenberg was awarded the title of "Genius" by the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She was also awarded the National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction for "The Collected Stories of Alice Munro," which won the Pen/Faulkner Award for Fiction. Eisenberg has also been a recipient of the MacArthur "Genius" fellowship and the National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction, among other honors. She is known for her short stories and essays, which have appeared in such publications as The New Yorker and The Paris Review.
BOOKS
Author inspired for 'The Snow Queen'

As an interviewee, Michael Cunningham is a man of hard work and humor. When asked about working at Yale—the author teaches two courses at the Green River University—his spirit filled with laughter, "It's my favorite job of all time. It has replaced, oh my god, my old job, teaching English at the Room Room Room in LA and wearing a grass skirt.

Best known for his 1995 Pulitzer-Prize-winning novel "The Hours," which borrowed bits of plot and characters from Virginia Woolf's "Mrs. Dalloway," Cunningham appears Monday at the Wortham Center for Arts.

Michael Cunningham continues on page 10.

Cunningham is keeping busy

Cunningham is keeping busy with his third novel, "The Snow Queen," which is not as difficult a book to write as "Madame Bovary," the author's second novel. Cunningham's first novel, "The Hours," was a bestseller and won the Pulitzer Prize in 1996.

In "The Snow Queen," Cunningham explores themes of love, loss, and the power of art. The novel follows the lives of three women who are connected through their shared love of literature. The novel also deals with issues of societal norms and expectations, particularly in regards to female sexuality.

Cunningham's novel is a rich tapestry of ideas and images, and is sure to be enjoyed by fans of his previous works. With its vivid imagery and engaging characters, "The Snow Queen" is a must-read for any fan of Cunningham's writing.

Michael Cunningham is a writer and teacher who has been published in a variety of magazines and journals. He is the author of three novels, "A Home at the End of the World," "Madame Bovary," and "The Snow Queen." Cunningham has received numerous awards and honors for his writing, including the Pulitzer Prize.

Michael Cunningham's next project is a book of essays titled "On Writing," which is due out in 2024.
Fairy tales, politics and TV: Acclaimed writer Michael Cunningham merges fantasy and reality in new novel

BY TARRA GAINES 11/9/14 | 11:04 am

Once upon a time in a city of enchanted towers in a time of snow, two brothers set out on two quests. Tyler was in search of magical song to save his
Acclaimed writer Michael Cunningham merges fairy tales, politics ...

...dying princess, while Barrett was visited by a celestial light in a forest's sky and journeyed to find the secret of the light's message. But these brothers did not live in some never ever fairytale land, but instead reside in the Bushwick Brooklyn of The Snow Queen, the latest novel by Pulitzer Prize-winning author of The Hours, Michael Cunningham.

I had a chance to speak to Cunningham recent before his Houston visit for the Inprint Margaret Root Brown Reading Series on Monday night and had to ask him how his latest work creates a kind of magical marriage between fairytale and a realistic story of fraternal relationships, drug use, infidelity and cancer all amid the general background hum of 21st century anxieties.

Queen vs. Queen

The Snow Queen resonates with echoes of the Hans Christian Andersen’s Snow Queen, but the plot is not based on classic fairytale, which Cunningham describes as a “very strange tale” that’s “kind of shaggy and all over the place.”

“If I only borrowed a couple elements from the Hans Christian Anderson stories, I very much borrowed that kind of fairy tale tone, that once-upon-a-time thing. It’s kind of dark, urban fairy tale,” Cunningham explained.

One of the fascinating elements of The Snow Queen is Cunningham’s ability to balance that fairy tale atmosphere, that never feels inauthentic, with a very realistic 21st century setting where people talk about and feel the affects of national politics on their everyday lives. The novel jumps years between its three main sections, peeking in for a few days and nights on Barrett and Tyler, Tyler’s wife Beth and her business partner Liz, right before the 2004 and then 2008 elections.

“I don’t feel a purpose of the novel is to promote one political ideology over another,” Cunningham insisted. “What is puzzling for me about a lot of contemporary American novels is the way they seem to take place in a political vacuum, as if it just didn’t matter who’s running the government, who’s running the media, who’s running the corporations,” he said, adding that this seems to be a particular issue of American fiction.

Adapting to Adaptations

Cunningham is one of the major novelists who is making this 2014-2015 Inprint season one of its most cinematic, but he is also one of those rare authors, with a novel that has been adapted into an Oscar-winning film, who has also seen from all sides the process of turning novel to film.

The playwright David Hare wrote the screenplay for The Hours, while Cunningham wrote the script for his novel A Home at the End of the World. A few years ago he was one of the screenwriters and executive producers for the movie version of Susan Minot’s Evening.

“Part of what was so thrilling about David Hare did in adapting The Hours was bringing new ideas to it, his ability to see it with a fresh eye and take it to other places. I loved that.”

Bucking the stereotype of the writer who jealous guards his own vision, it’s Hare’s adaptation that Cunningham seems most comfortable with.

“One of the lessons I learned by adapting A Home at the End of the World is that if a novel is going to be adapted, it should probably be adapted by someone other than the novelist,” Cunningham told me with a laugh. “Part of what was so thrilling about David Hare did in adapting The Hours was bringing new ideas to it, his ability to see it with a fresh eye and take it to other places. I loved that.”

While he doesn’t at all regret adapting his own novel nor writing the Evening screenplay, he’s put both experiences on a list of adventures he’s in no hurry to repeat.

promo ALERT Get in the Mood for the All New Mood Lounge at Via Colori
Acclaimed writer Michael Cunningham merges fairy tales, politics...

make it work as a movie. I don't regret it, but I wouldn't do it again anytime soon."

**Golden Age of Television**

That new “original something” just might be television. He’s responsible for one episode of the Showtime series Masters of Sex and is now working on a pilot for the network about “brilliant young directors in late ’60s America, that time when one minute Hollywood was making Doctor Dolittle and Cleopatra and suddenly it was Easy Rider and The Graduate.”

"Hardly a day goes by when I don’t talk to somebody about some great show way more often than I talk to somebody about a book or a movie. We’re talking about television."

He’s only at the point of writing the pilot episode and makes it clear that nothing is definite, but talking with Cunningham it becomes quickly apparent how much this acclaimed novelist respects television.

When I agreed with him, but said I hated to use the cliche of describing this television era as a golden age, Cunningham has few qualms about the term.

“I don’t take exception with the phrase. Hardly a day goes by when I don’t talk to somebody about some great show way more often than I talk to somebody about a book or a movie. We’re talking about television.”

When I asked if one of the allures of writing for television is that the multi-episode form is much closer to the novel, his “first and abiding love,” he agreed.

“Oh, absolutely, I’m finding that as a novelist the idea of writing a television series is just more in sync with what I do writing a novel than trying to make a whole story happen in two hours in a movie. I feel much more at home doing this.”

Cunningham will give a **craft talk**, which is open to the public, at 1 p.m. on Monday (Nov. 10) at the UiH Honors College Commons. He then reads from The Snow Queen that evening at 7:30 at the Wortham Center.

**RELATED NEWS**

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**promo ALERT** Get in the Mood for the All New Mood Lounge at Via Colori

http://houston.culturemap.com/news/arts/11-07-14-of-fairytales-polit...
Russell's stories begin with wacky premise, build to deeper stuff

"To keep things playful and light and fun at the beginning," the author says, "it means that the shape of their dreams, "Vampires in the Lemon Grove" by Karen Russell (Knopf, Oct. 28, 264 pages, $25.95) - something that is not always the case in real life. However, the author believes that the stories in this book are not just about the characters and their relationships, but also about the society in which they live.

"I was a pretty young kid, reading was a portable door to another universe," 's Childhood罩

Russell's writing often explores the concept of identity and how it is shaped by the world around us. In this book, the author uses the idea of vampires to explore themes of identity and belonging. The vampires are not just creatures of the night, but also a metaphor for the way in which we perceive ourselves and others.

"I just wanted the reader to feel a sense of wonder and excitement," Russell says. "I was interested in exploring the idea of vampires as a way to explore the complexities of identity and belonging."
Loss and gain in Kevin Young’s poetry

Poems “speak to grief and joy better than most anything,” says poet

“Grief is something one can think your way through,” says poet Kevin Young, whose latest poetry collection, the National Book Award-winning “Book of Hours,” emerged from two life-altering events: the death of his father and the birth of his son.

“Grief is something one can think your way through,” says poet Kevin Young, whose latest poetry collection, the National Book Award-winning “Book of Hours,” emerged from two life-altering events: the death of his father and the birth of his son.

Young, a professor at the University of Chicago, is known for his work in poetry and prose. His latest collection, “Book of Hours,” explores grief and joy, and received the 2019 National Book Award for Poetry.

Young grew up in a family of writers, and his poetry is often characterized by a sense of loss and renewal. “I think a lot about the power of grief,” he says. “I think it’s something that we all experience, and it’s something that we all need to talk about.”

The poems in “Book of Hours” are a testament to the power of grief, and the ways in which it can transform us. They explore the difficult emotions that come with loss, and the ways in which we can find new meaning in the aftermath.

For Young, the process of writing these poems was a way to make sense of his own experiences, and to connect with others who have shared similar challenges. “I think it’s important to talk about grief,” he says. “I think it’s important to understand that it’s okay to feel overwhelmed, and that it’s okay to feel lost.”

Young’s poems are filled with images of nature, and the ways in which it can offer solace and comfort. He writes about the beauty of the natural world, and the ways in which it can help us to find hope and renewal.

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In 1987, Kazuo Ishiguro holed up in his South London home and wrote/indexed— not caring about style or first draft points, writing beforehand as fast as the words and phrases came.

He wrote in hours a day, six days a week, for four weeks. And when he finished, he had a first draft of “The Remains of the Day,” a Booker Prize-winning book that brought him international acclaim and became an Oscar-nominated film.

Ishiguro on war, forgetfulness and cowboys

Boots and a hat just aren’t going to cut it at RodeoHouston, as any cowgirl worth her salt knows. Add some fringe, feathers and turquoise, and you’ve got the start of a friendship between fashion and Western sensibilities.

By Joy Sewing

For Rodeo Houston, more is more when it comes to style.

“Everyone wants the flowy look of feathers and fringe,” Waller designer Pat Dahnke says. “We’ve added them to our pieces and have had the most successful collection in our 47-year history.”

The casual-chic look has mass appeal, she says. “Anyone can buy one ‘wow’ piece and mix it in.”

Dahnke designs beaded, custom-dyed tops embellished with Coque rooster feathers. She tops the looks off with turquoise, another must-have for rodeo.

Fringes and feathers have appeared in designers’ ready-to-wear collections and at retailers from Palais Royal and Macy’s to specialty stores like Pinto Ranch, which sells Dahnke’s collection, and the new Lucchese store in Highland Village.

“Fringes has been a staple in Western wear. Now, it’s on the runway, and there are even boots with fringe,” says Eva Garcia, Pinto Ranch’s director of marketing. “We started seeing it in stores last season. It seems like an element every designer is doing.”

Garcia says she even snapped Rodeo continues on G6

Above, Lucchese Parker cross body bag, $1,295, Lucchese. Top, Taylor Hammonds of Neal Hamil Agency is wearing a 4Love & Liberty top, $149, Ian Antonio Bell, $495, Lucchese Saratoga Boots, $1,295, all from Lucchese in Highland Village.
Nonfiction

1. Being Mortal: By Atul Gawande. The surgeon and New Yorker writer considers how doctors and patients spend their last days and how we can do better. Includes suggestions for how they can help. "The subject of a PBS documentary.


3. Believe: By David Av Sol. A memoir by the political consultant who became Barack Obama's campaign strategist and White House adviser."

4. Yes, Please: By Amy Poehler. A humorous memoir by the comedian and actress, an alumna of "Saturday Night Live" and the star of Parks and Recreation."

5. What If?: By Randall Munroe. A physics genius answers 100 of the internet's most ridiculous questions, based on part in the "What If?" comic strip.

6. Twelfth Night: By William Shakespeare. "A play of comedy and love, featuring two sets of twins, and a character who is mistaken for his twin brother."

7. Leaving Before the Sunrise: By Julian Young. The lives of a blind French girl and a French girl who has recovered from a stroke, set in late-twentieth-century Paris. The story follows the sexual relationships, the blind girl's love for her late husband, and the French girl's love for her late husband's brother.

8. The Buried Giant: By Kazuo Ishiguro. "A tale set in late-fifth-century Britain, when a new thinking of the North Sea from the sea led the general consensus that there were new people leading steadily into the European mainstream." The novel explores the implications of the disappearing of the blind girl's husband and the French girl's husband."


10. Twelve Days: By Jane Smiley. A memoir by an army journalist who became a prisoner of war in Afghanistan.

Fiction

1. The Girl on the Train: By Paula Hawkins. A psychological thriller set in New York City, New York. The novel explores the complicated relationship between two women, one of whom is a cultivator of a complex relationship with her former husband."

2. All the Light We Cannot See: By Anthony Doerr. The lives of a blind French girl and a French girl who has recovered from a stroke, set in late-twentieth-century Paris. The story follows the sexual relationships, the blind girl's love for her late husband, and the French girl's love for her late husband's brother.

3. The Lasting Hour: By Lisa McMann. "A tale of a young Pennsylvania girl who has recovered from a stroke, set in late-twentieth-century France. The story follows the sexual relationships, the blind girl's love for her late husband, and the French girl's love for her late husband's brother."


5. The Nightingale: By Kristin Hannah. "A tale of a young Pennsylvania girl who has recovered from a stroke, set in late-twentieth-century France. The story follows the sexual relationships, the blind girl's love for her late husband, and the French girl's love for her late husband's brother."

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10. Twelve Days: By Jane Smiley. A memoir by an army journalist who became a prisoner of war in Afghanistan.
ON THE TOWN

English boarding school, formed the basis of another movie, Ishiguro has many gifts as a novelist, but what really sets him apart from his contemporaries is his ability to transport his readers to worlds that seem both unreal and strangely familiar. Whether depicting postwar Japan, where he lived until he was five (A Pale View of the Hills), or some mysterious unnamed Central European city (The Unconsoled), Ishiguro always manages to imbue his work with a certain dream-like quality.

This is especially true of his long-awaited novel The Buried Giant, which hits bookstores this month. Set in fifth-century England, it tells the story of two elderly Britons—indigenous Celtic-speaking inhabitants—making their way across the island amid the Anglo-Saxon invasion. “The setting is kind of weird,” Ishiguro confesses. But while the book takes place in the early Middle Ages, its themes—war, genocide, shared memory, and kinship—bring to mind other tragic episodes in human history, not to mention present-day realities.

“This is an invitation for you to apply [a setting] metaphorically to the world you live in, to the other people who live here,” he says. “I’m not trying to write a piece of history in fictional form. I’m trying to write something universal and eternal about people, their relationships, and so on.”

Ishiguro comes to Houston this month as part of Inprint’s Margaret Root Brown Reading Series, one stop on his first book tour in a decade. The London-based author professes to be “intrinsically interested in” the Bayou City, saying he’s been reading up on it recently. “I have been to Houston twice before,” and I’m really looking forward to going back there. It does have a very distinct atmosphere. I have to say, Texas. It doesn’t quite feel like the rest of the United States to me. It has a very strong flavor.” We’ll take that as a compliment. —Justin Mitchell

KAZUO ISHIGURO

Mar. 23 at 7:30, 55
Cullen Theater, Wortham Theater Center, 501 Texas Ave. 713-521-2020, inprint.org

MR. TAMBOURINE MAN (BOOKER)

A celebrated author reads from his first novel in a decade.

“FROM ABOUT WHEN I WAS about 15 to when I was about 22, 23, I was very, very focused on wanting to become a singer-songwriter,” says Kazuo Ishiguro. “This was in the 1970s, when singer-songwriters were the thing. This was the great era of the singer-songwriter.” So what happened when he cut his demo and began shopping it around to record labels? “Complete failure,” says the 60-year-old, matter-of-factly. “I wasn’t very good.” Once it dawned on him that he’d never be the next Bob Dylan, Ishiguro decided to try his hand at fiction. “When I started to write stories, lots of doors opened for me. That’s what I was allowed to do.”

Today, with seven novels and one story collection under his belt, the Japanese-born British writer is about as far from failure as one can be in the literary world. His 1989 novel The Remains of the Day, which depicts the tragicomic life of a quintessentially English butler during World War II, won the Man Booker Prize, England’s most prestigious literary award, and was adapted into a critically acclaimed film. 2005’s Never Let Me Go, a dystopian tale about three friends who discover the horrifying truth behind their seemingly idyllic life at an

FILM

ALSO LIKE LIFE: THE FILMS OF HOU HSAIO-HSIEN

Born in China’s Guangdong Province in 1947, in the middle of the Chinese Civil War, Hou Hsiao-hsien and his family fled with Chang Ke-She’s Nationalists to Taiwan when he was a year old. His movies examine the dislocations and upheavals of Taiwanese history through intimate portraits of individuals and families. He’s widely considered to be the country’s greatest filmmaker, with six movies nominated for the Palme d’Or at the Cannes Film Festival. March 6-8, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. 36.910001 Bissom St. 713-639-7300, mfaht.org/films. March 13-15, Rice Cinema, Rice University. 55.61012 Main St, Entrance B. 713-348-4833, ricecinema.rice.edu

FAMILY

CHILDREN’S MUSEUM OF HOUSTON

March 7-22 Amazingly Immature Spring Break: Why let college students have all the fun? This year, bring your kids to the Children’s Museum for two full weeks of special activities including live entertainment, a bungee trampoline, human hamster balls, dance parties, and, to mark Pi Day (March 14), the museum’s annual Shaving Cream Pi(e) Fight. All activities included with museum admission. $9.55001 Biss. St. 713-521-1183, cmHouston.org

HOUSTON CHILDREN’S FESTIVAL

March 23 & 29 from 10:30 to 8:30
Founded in 1988, the Houston Children’s Festival now claims to be the largest such affair in the United States, and has even been named “one of the world’s 300 irreplaceable events” by Frommer’s Travel Guides. This year’s installment features six stages of live music, appearances by Disney’ and Nickelodeon celebrities, and plenty of other fun activities. And it’s all for a good cause—over the years, the festival has raised over $5 million for Child Advocates, 810-12 Downtown Houston. 713-529-1396, houstonchildrensfestival.com

HOUSTON SYMPHONY

March 7 at 10am & 11:30am Star Wars and More! To celebrate the impending release of J.J. Abrams’s new Star Wars sequel, the Houston Symphony has assembled selections from John Williams’s iconic film scores. After all, what would the sci-fi series be without that bombastic music, or Darth Vader’s ominous theme? Also included on the program are some works that likely inspired Williams, such as Tchaikovsky’s 1812 Overture and Respighi’s Pines of Rome. 5/4, Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana St. 713-224-7575, houstonsymphony.org

SPACE CENTER HOUSTON

Thru April 26 Amazing Universe: The Science of Ripley’s Believe It Or Not! You may have visited one of the many Ripley’s Believe It Or Not! museums with their collections of freakish, one-of-a-kind people and objects, but do you know the science behind the sideshow? At this exhibition, learn more about the world’s largest and smallest organisms, unusual cultural practices from around the world, and the story behind some of the stumping (and oftentimes confusing) feats highlighted by the museum. $28.95, NASA Pkwy, 281-484-2000, spacecenter.org

LISTINGS EDITED BY MICHAEL HARDY

Please call to confirm dates and times of events as information is subject to change. Prices listed reflect the full range of adult and student ticket prices at the door and in advance. Check with box offices for subscription member, or other discounts. To have your event considered for listing, please send written information by e-mail to listings@houstontimes.com at least five months prior to the event’s occurrence. Listings must include times and dates for the event, prices, location, and a contact phone number for readers. Items are run as space-available basis and bear no relationship to advertising.
THURSDAY
PAGE 17
The Ensemble produces another play by Pearl Ciage.

TUESDAY
PAGE 20
A restored exploitation classic screens at Alamo.

WEDNESDAY
PAGE 21
Harlan Coben deraes readers to figure out The Stranger.

LITERARY EVENTS
Impact of Margaret Root Brown Reading Series 2014-2015
Monday

This is not the first time the Ensemble has produced a Ciaage play. “We know this artist. We like the enriched characters she creates,” said Morris. “She allows us to be taken away for a moment and wrapped in mystical layers of love and safety. That’s the beauty of what Ms. Ciaage does.”

“This play is very funny (and), even though it’s set in 1973, the issues are still current,” Morris added. “It has the stuff of a good scandal. Everyone loves scandal.”

Returning cast members include Kendrick “Kay” Brown, recently seen in Piy.-Cynthia Brown Garcia, who was in The Ensemble’s premiere of Christmas with Great Aunt De-tria Ward, who won a Houston Theater Best Actress award for her performance in Ciaage’s The Nacirema Society, and Mirron Wil- lia, who recently performed in the Ensemble production of The Meeting. Yurina Harbour-Payne makes her Ensemble debut. 7:30 p.m. Thursdays, 8 p.m. Fridays, 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Saturdays, 3 p.m. Sundays. Through April 11. The Ensemble Theatre, 3518 Main. For information, call 713-523-0555 or visit ensemblehouston.com. 823. KATRICALAG

THU
3/19

■ THEATER
THED POLITICS OF LOVE
Transport yourself back to a time when, in just moments, politics and love make for a compelling drama. Kaynard Jackson will become the first African-American mayor of Atlanta, Georgia. Jackson’s historic 1973 mayoral election serves as the backdrop for Pearl Ciage’s rich romantic comedy. Kazuo Isihiguro

oi

■ OPERA
BREATHTAKING FIGHT SCENES
Whether you’re a fan of French composer Georges Bizet’s Carmen, at more than three hours in length, or a novice to opera, you’re sure to appreciate the upcoming production of La Tragedie de Carmen at Opera in the Heights, the final offering of its 2014-15 season.

In 1873, a British director, Peter Brook, stripped away all of the nonessential elements and made it even more accessible,” explained Lynda Keith McKnight, OIH stage director. “He stripped it down to four main people and left all of the music intact.”

This dark tale of love and jealousy, exciting in tragedy and death, retains the well-known musical moments from the original opera: female fatalist Carmen’s “Seguidilla” and “Ha-bana,” bullfighter Escamillo’s “Toledan Song” and naive soldier Don José’s “Flower Song.” This will be the second OIH produc-tion for conductor Iri Eki Ismaier.

“It’s a very intense 80 minutes. This will appeal to modern audiences—it’s very visceral, it has amusing fight work,” McKnight said, produ-


Author wraps Jamaican truths in a symphony of voices

Marlon James’ latest novel is a street酷血7的 distinct and unforgettable voices. “A Brief History of Seven Killings” is a novel that explores the past and present of Kingston, Jamaica, and the complexities of its historical events.

“Jamaica, as an island with one of the more memorable austere in the book, is a place where you are a certain kind of person, chapter headings tell the reader, to return to the past. Sometimes it’s a CIA torturer, or a school teacher, or a criminal, or a police officer, or a journalist. In some ways, the book is a mirror of James’ own life. He grew up in a family of lawyers, and his parents are police. His mother is a lawyer. His father is a police officer. His grandfather was a police officer.

The novel tells the story of a man named Bob Marley, who is being hunted by a gang of.pdf, and his family is locked up in prison. The novel is told in first person, and the reader is given a glimpse into the mind of the gang member who is hunting Bob Marley.

The individual voices pile up throughout the novel, as you’ve stepped inside a story that is told from multiple points of view. Each voice is unique, and they compete for turf and power, as the electricity is sputtering and the reader is left to decide what is real and what is imagined.

The gang member says, “It’s a hell of a thing when a gun comes out of your hand. You don’t know what you’re doing. The thought of a bullet in the air is a terrifying thing. And you don’t want to think about it. You just want to get away from it.”

The novel is a meditation on the way in which language, blood, brains, piss, music, and electricity are intertwined. It is a meditation on the way in which history and memory are created and destroyed.

The individual voices pile up throughout the novel, as you’ve stepped inside a story that is told from multiple points of view. Each voice is unique, and they compete for turf and power, as the electricity is sputtering and the reader is left to decide what is real and what is imagined.

James Bradley: Author will discuss and sign the book at Brazos Bookstore.

Gwendolyn Zapata: Author will sign and discuss the book at the Wortham Theater Center, 1001 Fannin, 713-937-5559 or bluewillowbookshop.com.

Maggie Galehouse: Author will sign and discuss the book at the Wortham Theater Center, 1001 Fannin, 713-937-5559 or bluewillowbookshop.com.

Jeffrey Skemp: Author will sign and discuss the book at the Wortham Theater Center, 1001 Fannin, 713-937-5559 or bluewillowbookshop.com.

Blue Willow Bookshop: Author will sign and discuss the book at the Wortham Theater Center, 1001 Fannin, 713-937-5559 or bluewillowbookshop.com.

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A WEIGHTY STORY

An odd message accompanied the delivery of Marlon James’s novel, *A Brief History of Seven Killings*. “Good luck, my friend—It’s 669 pages!” Actually, it’s 688 pages. It’s also brilliant. James is in town as part of the Imprint Margaret Bone Reading Series, along with Cristina Henriquez. The story of an attempted assassination of Jamaican musician Bob Marley in 1976, *Seven Killings* gives voice to an array of characters—Rolling Stone reporter, CIA agents, corrupt cops, ambitious politicians, drug dealers, gang members, children of the Kingston ghettos and a few ghosts. Most of them relate their stories in colorful, synecdoched Jamaican patois.

Interestingly, famed reggae musician Marley, called simply the Singer in the narrative, isn’t the focus of *Seven Killings*. Instead, James concentrates on the people around Marley, an eclectic cast of Everymans. Using the assassination attempt as an entry into Jamaican culture and politics, James examines not Marley but the complicated, contradictory world that produced him and his music. 7:30 p.m. Wortham Theater Center, 501 Texas. For information, visit imprinthouston.org. $5. OLIVIA FLORES ALVAREZ
Geoff Dyer finds inspiration at sea

Writer gains appreciation for the military while working on latest novel

By Maggie Galehouse

Geoff Dyer’s writing is widely, wildly omnivorous. An Englishman who lives in Venice Beach, Calif., Dyer has penned four novels and several genre-defying books on topics ranging from jazz to film to travel. His particular literary cocktail is a heady mix of innocence, observation and wit, offset by a bracing dash of self-deprecation. “A tourist with a notebook,” he calls himself.

Dyer’s collection of essays, “Otherwise Known as the Human Condition” (2011), won the National Book Critics Circle Award for Criticism. “Another Great Day at Sea” (2014), his latest book, recounts two weeks he spent aboard a busy aircraft carrier with the U.S. Navy. Dyer never says exactly where he was, but it’s a 40-minute flight from Bahrain.

Currently teaching at the Michener Center for Writers at the University of Texas at Austin, Dyer, 56, appears in Houston on Monday as the final guest of Inprint’s 2014-15 Margaret Root Brown Reading Series.

Q: By my reckoning, you were an outsider several times over on the USS George H.W. Bush aircraft carrier. You’re English. You’re a civilian. You’re in your 50s, which, as you note in the book, is old for the people serving on the ship. And you’re tall, which means the threat of bumping your head in a passageway was ever-present. Was this sort of compound otherness a good vantage point from which to report?
A: I love feeling like I belong, and America is famous for how many people want to belong here and how quickly that process of assimilation occurs. Generally speaking, I knew I was going to like being on the ship. It was a sort of concentration of America. I think it’s hard to imagine the life these sailors are leading, which is so completely the opposite of mine. My self-discipline is indistinguishable from self-indulgence. There are so many books of reportage about journalists being embedded. My book doesn’t merit being spoken of in the same breath. In a sense, I was adamant to avoid that sort of immersion reporting by refusing to share a room. For me, it was a highly unusual pleasure cruise.

Q: There are endless literary references throughout, to Albert Camus, William Cowper, W.H. Auden ... though my favorite is a phrase that invokes Joan Didion: “I’d ended up feeling less conspicuous on the boat, not Didionly invisible but more at ease and confident around the people I ran into every day.”
A: Those writers are part of my circuitry, part of my bloodstream really. They helped me make sense of what was going on. The experience of looking at a great expanse of water is inherently meditative. Particularly striking is the hugeness of the ocean compared to the claustrophobic atmosphere on the boat.

Q: At one point you meet with the captain’s cook, whose previous experience with journalists — she was miffed when one article claimed she was making baked halibut when, in fact, the halibut was fried — has been unpleasant. You tell her: “I feel I have to say at the outset that facts are not my strong point ... To be perfectly honest, strong points are not my strong points.” So I have to ask: As a writer, what are your strong points?
A: Many bits of my books are funny, but there’s also a kind of tendency to go into the metaphysical aspect of things, a quasi-philosophic thing. I would never want to be described as a comic writer. It’s so limiting. I hope my humor is in no way condescending my ability to find things moving. There were so many people I came across on the carrier who were so admirable, even if I was at ideological loggerheads with them.

Q: And you also came away with a profound respect for what we might call a military “attitude.”
A: In the military, you’ve just got to suck it up. It’s raining and you’re soaking wet? You still have to do your job. Your best friend had his arms blown off? You’ve still got to do it. I have really become a believer in the idea of sucking it up.

GEOFF DYER

Author appearance
Geoff Dyer will appear as part of the Margaret Root Brown Reading Series, 7:30 p.m. Monday, Wortham Theater Center, 500 Texas. $5 general admission. Doors open 6:45 p.m. Information: inprinthouston.org.

‘Another Great Day at Sea’
By Geoff Dyer.
Knopf Doubleday, 208 pp., $15.95 paperback.

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