

# **Media Coverage from our 40th Anniversary Season**

## ZEST

## FICTION

By Andrew Dansby  
STAFF WRITER

Nick Hornby opens his new novel with a list. Those familiar with his work should find some sense of continuity connecting the opening paragraph of “Just Like You” to Hornby’s debut novel from 25 years ago, “High Fidelity.” For some, a world of chaotic variables requires a patchwork sense of order and organization.

So “Just Like You” presents an informal accounting – rather than a numbered list – of various hatreds found in the mind of Lucy, a school teacher and a divorced mother of two standing in line at a London meat market with another parent whose company she finds disagreeable.

Asked if he has his own list of hatreds and how they’ve changed over the years, the British author paused a moment.

“Well, yeah, more of a mental checklist,” he said. “Age does change it a little bit. The thing that has surprised me over the last year is going back to feeling a little like I did in my 20s with Mrs. (Margaret) Thatcher. My first general election vote was against Thatcher. I had that all through the ‘80s, when I was in my 20s, this loathing for her and her party, which over time has sort of calmed right down. But the government’s handling of both Brexit and the pandemic, well, that filled me with a rage I hadn’t felt in quite a long time.”

Hornby – who will do a virtual event through Inprint’s Margaret Root Brown Reading Series today – touched on several social and cultural themes in his story, though the way we experience time as we age is the connective tissue in “Just for You.” Working at the meat market is Joseph, a Black man in his 20s looking to make some money on the side. So he babysits Lucy’s sons, and in short order, he and Lucy find themselves drawn to one another. Hornby writes about the two navigating their backgrounds from “a different class, a different culture, a different generation.”

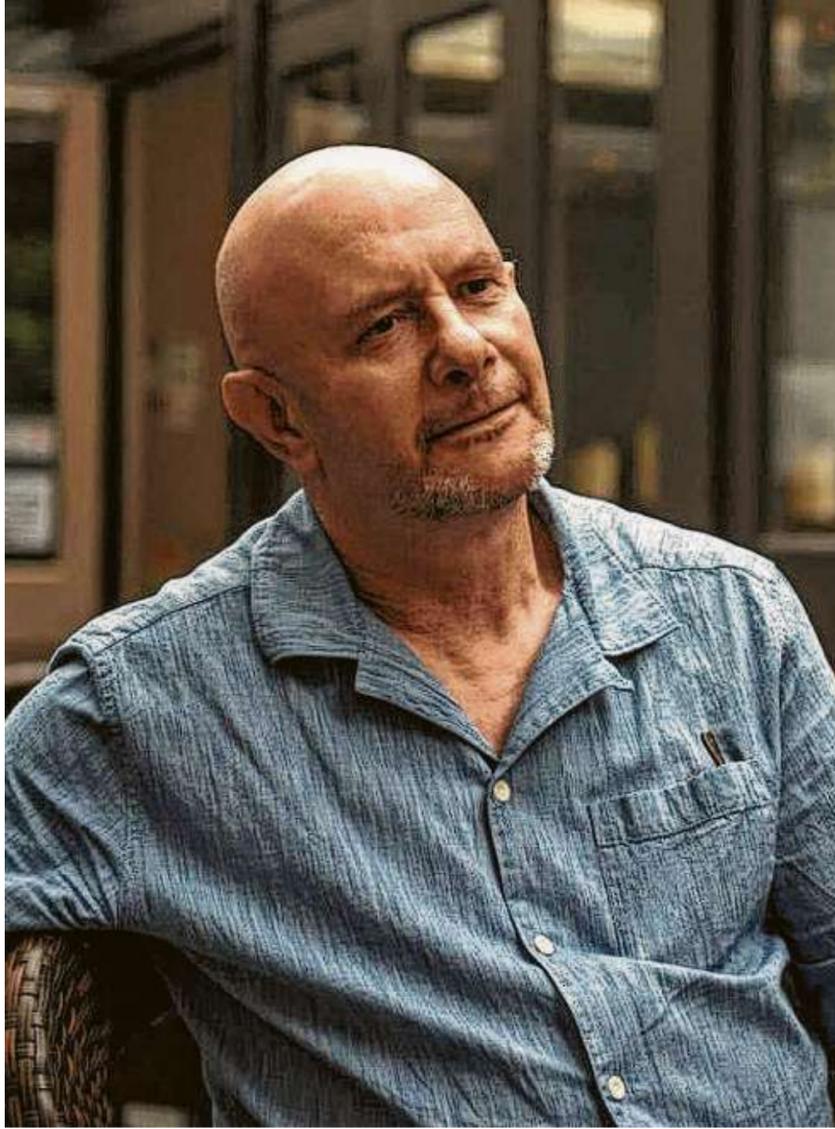
The line reminds me of the comment about home repairs: between fast, cheap and good workmanship, you can get two but never three.

“As I was writing the book,” Hornby said, “generation appeared to be the biggest problem to me. And they have to solve it by agreeing not to confront it. By living in a bubble. The other two, I can be reasonably optimistic about in terms of the future. Of course, generation never presents an actual divide. Just a set of complications.”

#### Lurching into adulthood

At one point, Joseph, an aspiring DJ, plays one of his pieces of music for Lucy, and

# Nick Hornby’s tale of love in the time of Brexit



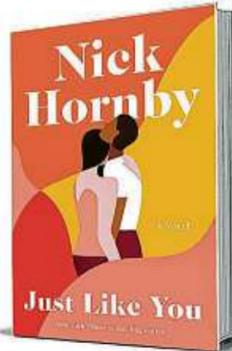
Parisa Taghizadeh

Briton Nick Hornby’s latest novel is “Just Like You.”

finds her positive physical response to the song – a stilted head bobbing – horrifying in a way he wouldn’t were she closer to his age.

As one who has written regularly about music over the years, Hornby found such divides fascinating and frustrating. “With music writing, I think young writers want the knowledge of the older music writers but not the cynicism. They don’t want to read the rock critic saying, ‘Oh, I’ve heard this (expletive) so many times: Nirvana via Zeppelin.’ Kids want to be excited about new music that doesn’t sound like anything they’ve heard. So there is that tension between too much knowledge and not enough enthusiasm.”

With a long view of Hornby’s work, a graceful arc can be seen over a quarter century. His earlier novels touch on men reluctant to cut the last



#### ‘Just Like You’

by Nick Hornby  
Riverhead  
368 pages, \$27

#### Nick Hornby reading virtual event

When: 4 p.m. Sunday  
Details: \$5;  
inprinthouston.org

threads connecting them to adolescence. Over the years, his attention has been drawn more to those further into adulthood. That said, if the arc in his work feels smooth, the paths his characters follow are full of minor kinks, twists and backtracks. Such is the leaning, lurching and learning most people take on their paths.

Hornby’s previous novel is “State of the Union,” a 10-part story about a lengthy marriage slowly coming undone.

“I think I was in some kind of groove after ‘State of the Union,’” he said. “I was thinking about our central domestic relationships as something deeply important to us and meaningful to us in the way we think about the world. So I knew I wanted to write about a couple again but in as different a way as possible.”

The dynamic between

Joseph and Lucy is full of possibility. He forms an almost instant bond with her sons through their enthusiasm for soccer and the FIFA video game, a reminder that Joseph’s age falls between that of Lucy and her children.

#### The Brexit effect

By setting the book in 2016, Hornby’s latest also gets a narrative nudge by the EU referendum, which has an agitative effect on the characters and the story. As Hornby writes, Brexit “was giving groups of people who didn’t like each other, or at least failed to comprehend each other, an opportunity to fight.”

“Nobody knew it was going to be a cultural bomb,” Hornby said of Brexit. “That’s the interesting thing about it. I think most people would have taken Joseph’s line about, ‘Who gives a (expletive) about that?’ But all these things got hooked onto it. A whole kind of belief system got attached to this very simple vote that should have been about something else.”

Still, it’s a Hornby novel, so the narrative possesses a naturalistic tone. Were it represented by an EKG, there would be no vicious spikes.

“I’m the wrong guy if you’re looking for big, dramatic things to occur,” he says, laughing. “And that also wasn’t my experience in London during those two years.”

But anxiety has festered some as the novel found its way into the world, as his London – “a thriving, multi-racial city” – deals with Brexit, a pandemic and leaders whose only interest is power.

“Just Like You” was completed before March. But a meditation on the couple’s life inside a bubble feels fitting at a time when society is increasingly indoors.

Hornby takes no credit for prescience, but his accounting of Lucy’s hatreds that opens the book is eerie: “She hated any Conservative education secretary, she hated listening to her younger son’s trumpet practice, she hated any kind of liver, the sight of blood, reality TV shows, grime music and the usual abstractions – global poverty, war, pandemics, the imminent death of the planet, and so on.”

Hornby spoke about the book after taking a walk around his neighborhood as England enters a period of shutdown. “It’s a nice day for a walk,” he said. “But it feels grim.”

There exist bubbles of our own construction, but “Just Like You” also presents the ways our customized bubbles still exist under larger cultural bubbles. And some of Lucy’s hatreds that may have once felt so abstract feel less abstract today.

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## EVENTS

## SUNDAY

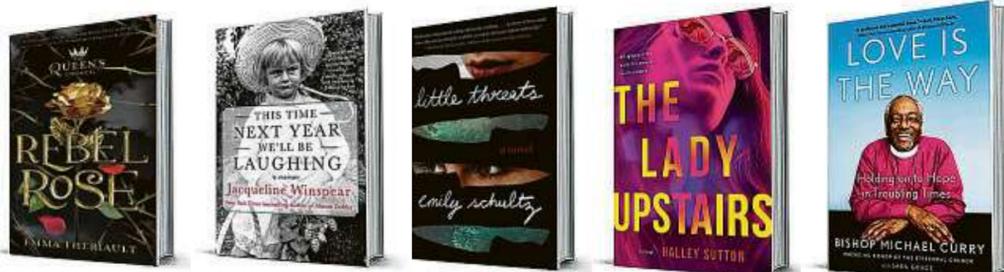
**Nick Hornby:** Author will give a short reading from his new novel “Just Like You,” followed by a conversation with novelist/journalist Vendela Vida, via Inprint’s website. 4 p.m., inprinthouston.org

## TUESDAY

**Emma Theriault:** Author will be in conversation with Victoria Aveyard to discuss “The Queen’s Council Rebel Rose” via Blue Willow’s Facebook Live stream. 7 p.m., bluewillowbookshop.com  
**Jacqueline Winspear:** Author will discuss “This Time Next Year We’ll Be Laughing” with Doree Shafir via Murder By The Book’s YouTube page. 6:30 p.m., murderbooks.com

## WEDNESDAY

**Ian Rankin:** Author will discuss “A Song for the



Dark Times” via Murder By The Book’s YouTube page. 1 p.m., murderbooks.com  
**Bishop Curry:** Author will be in conversation with Bishop Doyle to discuss “Love Is the Way” via Zoom. 6 p.m., brazosbookstore.com  
**Emily Schultz and Halley Sutton:** Authors will discuss “Little Threats” and “The Lady Upstairs” via Murder By The Book’s YouTube page. 7 p.m.,

murderbooks.com

## THURSDAY

**Special Virtual Storytime:** Author Kelly Bennett will read “Norman: One Amazing Goldfish!” via Blue Willow’s Facebook Live stream. 10 a.m., bluewillowbookshop.com  
**Ryan Sittton:** Author will discuss “Crucial Decisions” via Zoom. 7 p.m., brazosbookstore.com



Arden Wray / New York Times

Margaret Atwood will give a reading Nov. 14.

## SATURDAY

**Margaret Atwood:** Author will give a short reading from her new poetry collection “Dearly,” followed by a conversation with MacArthur Fellow Natalie Diaz, via Inprint’s website. 7 p.m., inprinthouston.org  
**Tribute to Abigail Arias:** Author Julie Coy and illustrator Grant Maniér will sign copies of “Abigail the Brave Little Llama,” a children’s book based on the 6-year-old who captured hearts for wanting to become a law enforcement officer before succumbing to cancer a year ago. Noon-3 p.m., Freeport Police Department, 430 N. Brazosport Blvd., Freeport; jigsawgrant.com

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## READ THIS

# Inprint's 40th Margarett Root Brown Reading Series Lineup Just Went from Big to Epic

Kazuo Ishiguro and Jhumpa Lahiri will now join an already-stacked lineup of literary heavyweights.

By [Emma Schkloven](#) • 1/5/2021 at 11:45am



IMAGE: [COURTESY OF PUBLISHERS](#)

**Updated 12:40 p.m. Jan 5**

**THE 2021 (VIRTUAL) EDITION OF INPRINT'S BELOVED ANNUAL READING SERIES WAS ALREADY SLATED TO BE BIG. NOW IT'S JUST MINDBLOWING.** Last fall the organization announced the stacked lineup for its 40th Margaret Root Brown Reading Series. And now it's added two more literary heavyweights to the schedule: Nobel Laureate Kazuo Ishiguro on March 7 and Pulitzer Prize-winner Jhumpa Lahiri on May 10.

“We are extremely excited to add these brilliant, internationally acclaimed authors to what is already an extraordinary season,” Inprint Executive Director Rich Levy said in a statement. “It’s fitting that our 40th anniversary season be filled with an astonishing array of literary experiences, and of the highest technical quality, in the context of the pandemic.”

In Inprint’s “virtual studio,” Ishiguro and Lahiri will read from their new books, *Klara and the Sun* and *Whereabouts*, respectively. Season ticket holders will receive admission to the studio and free copies of the books as part of their subscription. General admission tickets will also include a hardcover copy of the book.

*Kazuo Ishiguro: 5 p.m. Mar 7. \$30, general admission; tickets go on sale Jan 11. Online. Learn more [here](#).*

*Jhumpa Lahiri: 7 p.m. May 10. \$25, general admission; tickets go on sale Mar 8. Online. Learn more [here](#).*



**SPONSORED**

**Growing Beyond the Bayous: Spring Branch Trail Phase 1 Coming Soon!**

Presented by Spring Branch Management District

**Published 11:45 a.m. Sept 7, 2020**

**WHEN INPRINT CELEBRATES A SPECIAL OCCASION**, it goes seriously big. Nothing demonstrates that more than the lineup of internationally celebrated authors the organization is bringing for its Margaret Root Brown Reading Series’ 40th anniversary. It’s a group of talent sure to spark conversations in every corner of the Bayou City and beyond, thanks to a new tweak to the longstanding literary series.

“We wanted the lineup to be reflective of the time we’re in, reflect the issues that we’re all facing,” associate director Krupa Parikh tells *Houstonia*. “I think there’s a lot in this season that people will find very relevant and moving.”

Although a smaller lineup than in previous years, this seven-event, nine-writer season, which kicks off September 21 and runs through April 2021, features an array of literary heavyweights, including Pulitzer Prize winners Viet Thanh Nguyen, Marilynne Robinson, and Jericho Brown (a former Inprint Fellow, who just so happened to earn his PhD from the University of Houston). Also making appearances are National Medal of Arts recipient Julia Alvarez, Emmy-winning screenwriter and author Nick Hornby, and PEN/Hemingway Award recipient Chang-rae Lee, among others.

In an exciting twist, all of the season’s readings will be presented live via Inprint’s “virtual studio,” so you can satisfy that literary itch whether you’re in Houston or not. If safety allows, the two April readings will also be held in person—some serious icing on this book-themed anniversary cake.

*See this year’s full lineup below. For more information about tickets and each reading, visit [inprinthouston.org](http://inprinthouston.org).*

### **Inprint Margaret Root Brown Reading Series | 2020-2021**

**Sept 21:** Yaa Gyasi

**Oct 5:** Marilynne Robinson

**Oct 12:** Julia Alvarez & Sigrid Nunez

**Nov 8:** Nick Hornby

**Feb 22:** Lily King & Chang-rae Lee

**Apr 12:** Viet Thanh Nguyen

**April 26:** Jericho Brown

## ART &amp; EXHIBITS

# Arts Picks: REELpoetry, Chang-rae Lee novels and more

Andrew Dansby, Amber Elliott | February 18, 2021 Updated: February 18, 2021, 7:14 am

## 1. Chang-rae Lee

Novels by Chang-rae Lee require some patience: The new “My Year Abroad” is his first in seven years. But they’re constructed with such care that they always make the wait worthwhile. His latest focuses on a college dropout, Tiller Bardmon, on an overseas adventure, a “twelve and one-half percent Asian” visiting Asia on a wild, life-changing adventure guided by his mentor, a Chinese-American entrepreneur. He’s joined by Lily King, author of “Writers & Lovers” for a virtual reading and discussion.

When: 7 p.m. Feb. 22

Details: \$5; [inprinthouston.org](http://inprinthouston.org)

| THINGS TO DO |

## Best Virtual Bets: ReelAbilities, *Twilight*, and An Atwood Opera

NATALIE DE LA GARZA | FEBRUARY 18, 2021 | 9:47AM

If you happen to have all of your essential needs covered at the moment, well, good for you. Below you'll find a short list of the best virtual bets coming up to help you pass the time until we're all that lucky. And soon (hopefully) your fellow Houstonians will get a chance to enjoy them, too, as they'll surely be looking for ways to forget this freezing hell as soon as possible.

On Monday, February 22, at 7 p.m. you can enter the Inprint “virtual studio” to hear from authors Lily King and Chang-rae Lee as part of the **40th anniversary 2020/2021 Inprint Margaret Root Brown Reading Series**. Maggie Galehouse, a former *Houston Chronicle* book editor, will lead both writers in conversation, and both will give readings from their latest books. King will read from *Writers & Lovers*, a “wonderful, witty, heartfelt novel” about “a distressed young woman finding her way in late 20th century New England.” Lee will read from *My Year Abroad*, “a travelogue and a coming-of-age tale – and a mafia thriller that also skewers global capitalism.” You can purchase a ticket [here](#) for \$5, and support your local bookstore by picking up one or both of the books at a discount from Brazos Bookstore.

GET LIT(ERARY)

## Writer Lily King on *Writers and Lovers*

We chatted with the author about writing the book she wanted to read in her 20s before her virtual Inprint appearance tonight.

By [Ryan Pait](#) · 2/22/2021 at 10:25am

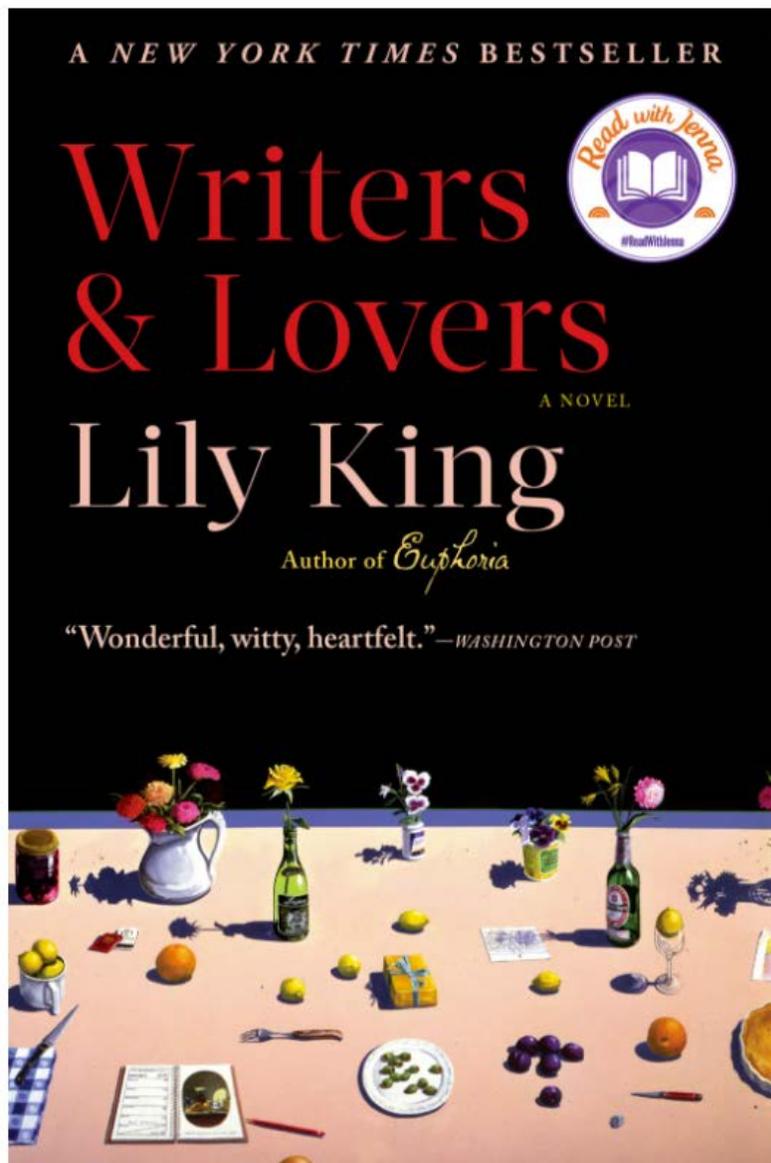


IMAGE: COURTESY OF GROVE ATLANTIC

## **WRITER LILY KING EXPERIENCED A NIGHTMARE THAT MANY WRITERS FACED LAST YEAR:**

her new book *Writers & Lovers* hit shelves just two weeks before much of the United States began shutting down under stay-at-home orders.

The novel, King's fifth, follows current waiter and aspiring writer Casey Peabody as she strives to move from one phase of her life into the next amidst grief, joy, romance, and artistic fulfillment.

King had a launch party for the book, did a handful of in-person events, and then began the process of canceling events as her three-month, on-the-road book tour went fully online instead.

Staying at home for her book tour meant more time with her family for King, something she says she relished. *Writers & Lovers* still found an audience, too—it was Jenna Bush Hager's March pick for *The Today Show* book club and featured prominently in "best of 2020" year-end lists—but King said that the psychic state readers found themselves in while stuck at home maybe let her get away with a happier ending than usual.

"I feel like I got lucky with the happy ending," King said. "Not to ruin it for anybody, but I think that because it was at this time, people kind of allowed me a happy ending. I'm not a writer that has a fully happy ending very often, and I feel like I was able to get away with it because people were so eager for that."

Now, almost a year out from the release of *Writers & Lovers*, King will celebrate its recent paperback release as she headlines the sixth installment of InPrint's 2020-2021 Margaret Root Brown Reading Series with fellow author [Chang-rae Lee](#). We caught up with King to talk about *Writers & Lovers* before the event.

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### **Writers writing about writers writing can feel like a snake eating its own tail—what made you want to tell Casey's story?**

I really felt that it was the kind of book that I wanted to read in my 20s and 30s when I was just starting out writing. I feel like men write about becoming writers much more than women do. I didn't feel like I'd read that story before. And personally, I love reading about writers. So I had no sense of taboo. And I've kind of been surprised by the question that comes up a lot: *How did I dare to write about*

writers? Everyone knows you're not supposed to write about writers. I never got that memo. (Laughs.) I love reading about writers.

It was tricky because I really wanted to write about what it felt like to hold a novel in your head and to have it slowly come out on the page. And yet, I knew that that wasn't going to be very exciting for readers. So I had to be so careful about how I rendered it, when it came out, and always erring on the side of concision and saying too little rather than saying too much. But I wanted so much to convey how the imagination works, and how it's always working, particularly when you're not at your desk. It's working when you're not thinking about it, and then suddenly, *Ah, that scene!* Time brings you something you've been working on, even though you weren't conscious of it. That stuff was important to me."

**You're at a point in your writing career where you've experienced success. What was it like for you getting into Casey's shoes, who's trying to catch a break?**

It was kind of surprisingly easy. I think it takes a long time to catch up with your own life. So much of me still feels like I'm waiting tables and trying to write my first novel. There are a lot of similarities between writing your fifth novel and writing your first novel. It really is just as terrifying. Maybe not just as terrifying, but you don't feel like you have a road map just because you went somewhere else. Now you have to go somewhere new, and you have to find your way. That was really easy to capture because I've done it so many times and have so many doubts with every single book—moments where I swore I was going to quit, and that kind of thing. I have so many dreams that I'm still waiting tables and I've forgotten the mushroom soup, and I can't get into the kitchen to get the silverware. That came back to me. I was worried about writing the waitressing scenes and not being able to remember the lingo, but slowly, slowly, slowly the lingo came back. It was easier than I thought to inhabit that life."

**Casey talks about what excites her about literature in the book when she's doing an unexpected job interview, and she says it's "that reverberation"—a book worming its way into your mind. Now that the book has been out for almost a year, what do you hope is reverberating with readers of *Writers & Lovers*?**

I guess I just want Casey to feel like a real human being to people when they read the book. What I love about reading is jumping into another person's consciousness. It just gives you a break from your own consciousness, which can be

unrelenting and oppressive at times. I love reading to have the feeling of being someone else for a little while and seeing the world from their eyes and with their language. That's what I want to reverberate. I love the feeling of reading a book and then putting it down, and going about my day, and having both my consciousness and the consciousness of that writer or that character in my head at the same time. It expands the way you experience your own life just a little bit. I love that. That would be my biggest hope: that I could give that to other people.

*Feb 22. Tickets \$5. Virtual event. More info and tickets at [inprinthouston.org](http://inprinthouston.org).*

**BETWEEN THE LINES**

## Writer Chang-rae Lee, Unleashed

We chatted with the award-winning author about his latest novel, *My Year Abroad*, before his virtual InPrint appearance tonight.

By [Ryan Pait](#) • 2/22/2021 at 9:52am



IMAGE: [COURTESY OF INPRINT](#)

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**FREQUENT READERS OF AWARD-WINNING NOVELIST CHANG-RAE LEE'S WORK** might find themselves shocked when they get a taste of his newest novel, *My Year Abroad*.

It's a radical departure from his previous work, featuring a fresh, funny sensibility that only Lee could render. The book follows a 20-something named Tiller on a wild romp across Asia with his equally enigmatic and charismatic mentor named Pong, who's eager to provoke the potential he sees in Tiller. Alexandra Schwartz writes in her *New Yorker* review of *My Year Abroad* that "Lee writes like a man released from a cage."

Why the change?

Lee said the freshness and possibility of Tiller's perspective was what excited him most because it provoked his own curiosity.

"This book is kind of a hybrid of a coming-of-age novel and a midlife crisis novel," Lee said. "I didn't want to write a midlife crisis novel because I find them so utterly dreadful in the usual way. I wanted to capture someone who's at the beginning of his recognition of himself in the world and to see where that might lead him."

On Monday Lee will read from *My Year Abroad* as he headlines the sixth installment of InPrint's 2020-2021 Margaret Root Brown Reading Series with fellow author Lily King. We caught up with Lee to talk about his new novel before the event.

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**The style of *My Year Abroad* is so distinctive: you have these big, blocky bildungsroman paragraphs, but they're interspersed with Tiller saying things like "IMHO." What was it like working out what you wanted the book to look and sound like in terms of the style?**

The tone, the cadence, the lyric he's going to sing—both literally and figuratively—for me was an early and abiding interest. I'm keenly passionate about language. I always have been. But I think this book, as you say, is in quite a different register. I think most of my other books—in part because of their historical subjects, the time

of life—they're quite serious. And in a way, looking back at it, the way that I narrated those books, whether in first- or third-person, was with a mournful heart. (Laughs.) Or at least measured and quite circumspect. And with Tiller, I really wanted to have him spread his wings and fly and swoop, be profane, be childish, be soulful: be everything that he was feeling inside.

I absolutely didn't want to try to say, "This is exactly how a 20-year-old would sound." It's not a transcript like that. It doesn't mean to be, and it's not intended to be. What I did want was to try to find a score for all the diversity of his soul. And it's both boyish and old soul, participating in the popular culture, but also being a keen observer of it. I had a different kind of liberty here that I quite enjoyed.

**Confidence in its many forms becomes crucial to the book. We start with the epigraph from Thomas Mann's *Confessions of Felix Krull, Confidence Man*, and Tiller ultimately realizes that he might've been conned into becoming "a person many factors more capable, a person who might not have otherwise bloomed." What made confidence such a compelling theme to work through? We normally see confidence flattened out into this positive thing, but we forget sometimes that when someone says "con man," they're saying "confidence man."**

I think a lot of people don't know where that term comes from! And the confidence man is exactly that: someone who blows you up, inspires you, to the point at which you have trust and self-belief, and you feel in some ways invincible. Usually in investments that end poorly, but of course, isn't that what we do for each other? And especially for our beloved and those closest to us? Isn't that what we are there for? To support each other—and even to the extent that it may be untrue. And maybe that's what love is.

And this is Tiller's journey. He starts as such a flat, unconfident character, and he's self-styled as completely ordinary. He's not some ambitious kid who wants to be extraordinary. His extraordinariness—whether real or illusory—is coaxed out enough in a shape that he can see it, and taste it, and maybe believe it. And that's enough for him to keep going, even though I think in the course of the book he starts to realize, *Ah, I don't know if this is real*. That's the allure and promise of Pong, but that's the allure and promise of the world. Sometimes, if we're lucky, it coaxes us and brings out attributes and capacities that we didn't know we had.

## **Lastly, are you worried that readers might be shocked when they google what “sounding” means?**

“Well, *I* was shocked when I googled what sounding means. (Laughs.) And I can’t remember how I decided that would happen. Sometimes writers write about their own experience, and thankfully, this is not one of those cases. But often writers write about things that they fear, and what you fear you’re kind of curious about. (Laughs.) It’s one of those arcane things that comes up in whatever sphere of human activity that I thought was kind of outlandish and flagrant and kind of fun. But one of the things that you do as a writer is you have a character, and you’re always trying to find—and there’s an infinite number of ways—but the 500 or 10,000 things that they’re going to confront, see, do that will really bring something out in them. So I hope it does that, and it’s not just this weird sexual thing. It may be small, but it’s an important moment of revelation for Tiller in one small part of his life. I learned something from it. Maybe my readers will learn something, too.”

## **Maybe just turn SafeSearch on before googling too much.**

“Absolutely.”

*Feb 22. \$5. Virtual event. More info and tickets at [inprinthouston.org](http://inprinthouston.org)*

## BOOKS

## Nobel Laureate Kazuo Ishiguro is among the authors appearing at book events Feb. 28-March 7

Virtual book discussions to check out Feb. 28-March 7

Ana Khan | February 27, 2021 Updated: March 1, 2021, 10:44 am



British novelist Kazuo Ishiguro speaks during a press conference at his home in London, Thursday Oct. 5, 2017. Ishiguro, best known for "The Remains of the Day," won the Nobel Literature Prize on Thursday, marking a return to traditional literature following two years of unconventional choices by the Swedish Academy for the 9-million-kronor (\$1.1 million) prize. (AP Photo/Alastair Grant) Photo: Alastair Grant/STF

## Here are the top 8 things to do in Houston this weekend

By [Craig D. Lindsey](#)

Mar 4, 2021, 6:00 am

**A**s we all know, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott [lifted the mask mandate](#) and said that the state is "100 percent open." Understandably, many will proceed with caution.

Fortunately, this weekend offers a mix of virtual and in-person offerings. Stay safe and enjoy the welcome sunshine. Here are your best bets for the weekend.

### **Sunday, March 7**

#### **[Inprint Margarett Root Brown Reading Series: Kazuo Ishiguro](#)**

Nobel Laureate Kazuo Ishiguro will give a short reading from his new novel *Klara and the Sun*, followed by a conversation with fiction writer Jim Shepard. This livestream event, part of the 40th anniversary, 2020/2021 Inprint Margarett Root Brown Reading Series, will be accessible from the Inprint website. Details on how to access the reading will be provided to season subscribers and to those who purchase general admission tickets in the Eventbrite email receipt. 5 pm.

| THINGS TO DO |

## Best Virtual Bets: Art Heist, Beethoven, and *Crazy Rich Asians*

NATALIE DE LA GARZA | MARCH 4, 2021 | 4:00AM

For those of us who still believe in taking public health and safety precautions, let us present to you this week's list of best virtual bets. Each one you can either enjoy from the comfort of your home or, for those who'd like to get out of the house responsibly, outdoors and socially distanced.

This Sunday, March 7, at 5 p.m. the [40th anniversary Inprint Margarett Root Brown Reading Series](#) continues when writer Jim Shepard leads a conversation with Nobel Laureate [Kazuo Ishiguro](#). Ishiguro will read from his new novel, *Klara and the Sun*, written from the perspective of an AF (artificial friend) of a sickly young woman. [Though mostly completed before lockdown, The Guardian](#) says it “feels like a message for all of us as we go about our drearily circumscribed days,” as it’s “energised by the friction between two different types of love: one that is selfish, overprotective and anxious, and one that is generous, open and benevolent.” You can purchase a ticket to the livestream for \$30, which includes a hardcover copy of the book for U.S. residents.

FICTION

# Ishiguro: Can a robot make sense of humanity?

By Andrew Dansby  
STAFF WRITER

Decades ago, Shizuo Ishiguro engineered a machine to predict storm surges in the ocean. His son, novelist and Nobel laureate Kazuo Ishiguro, says his father conducted his business not near the ocean, but rather “he worked in a laboratory in the woods, a long way away from the sea. The only time we saw the sea was when we went on holiday.”

Ishiguro, 66, was just 5 when his family moved to England from Japan for his father’s oceanographic work.

“I didn’t have a great deal of interest in science, despite growing up in a house with a scientist,” the younger Ishiguro says nearly 60 years later. “This arts-and-science division encouraged us to think of ourselves in different worlds, and I didn’t even feel guilty about it – that I didn’t understand basic things about his work. And now, not just with the pandemic but everything that has happened in the world over the past 20 years or so in terms of science and technology makes me regret that I’m not better educated in terms of scientific thought and a scientific way of pursuing truth. I’ve come to have a profound respect for that approach as opposed to the other way, which is to say whatever you feel is the truth is the truth.”

Despite divergent paths, both father and son wielded some distantly shared element of predictive contemplation about what happens beneath visible surfaces. In the case of the son, he’s done so over eight novels across 40 years. His most recent is “Klara and the Sun,” another story that connects to the Nobel Prize committee’s assessment of his work that “has uncovered the abyss beneath our illusory sense of connection with the world.”

Ishiguro – who will do a virtual reading and conversation Sunday through Inprint Houston – tells his new story through the perspective of Klara, a solar-powered Artificial Friend with a keen ability to observe human behavior and interact with people. She is purchased to accompany young Josie, a teenager who lives with her mother and appears to be ailing.

In other hands, “Klara and the Sun” might tread a rise-of-the-robots path toward a grim dystopic end. Ishiguro clarifies that “it’s not a dystopian novel. But the environment is potentially dystopian – portraying society staring at major changes.” In this sense, the novel strikes a similar tone to “Never Let Me Go,” his brilliant and bracing novel about a seemingly insular world involving a few teenagers who are part of a bigger, darker narrative.

“I can kind of see a rule being played out in my career, even if I wasn’t conscious of it,” he says. “But when I look back at the books, if the backdrop is quite settled and calm and peaceful and pleasant, the people in the foreground can exemplify the shortcomings and weaknesses of human nature. When the backdrop is cruel and bleak, the human beings at the front have the ability to display positive things about our nature.”

That sort of balance is how Ishiguro can probe “mortality and loneliness” but still produce a novel he considers optimistic and hopeful.



Andrew Testa / New York Times

**The Nobel Prize committee said Kazuo Ishiguro’s work “has uncovered the abyss beneath our illusory sense of connection with the world.”**

Admittedly, Klara is not a human being, but her advanced ability to process information and respond dislodges questions about what exactly makes us human. She makes her way from a storefront window to a home, where she tries to understand how she can be Josie’s closest companion when they’re alone yet more of an implement when others are around.

One character asks Klara if she’s meant to be regarded as a person worthy of an introduction or something more like a vacuum cleaner.

As has been the case since he published “A Pale View of Hills” in 1982, Ishiguro tells this story with narrative exactitude and verbal austerity: He reveals information with subtle delicacy and never sets loose a sentence that hints at self-congratulatory poetic aspiration. Like his other work, “Klara” unfolds with such understatement that it begs to be reread so the gentle moves in its narrative can be observed rather than felt.

In his Nobel lecture four years ago, Ishiguro discussed the oft-stated value of three-dimensional characters. And though he saw the value in them, he professed a greater interest in the ways his characters interacted. “Perhaps in the future,” he said in the lecture, “if I attended more to my relationships, my characters would take care of themselves.”

So Ishiguro has spent his creative time and energy looking beneath the surface at the many interactions that create our families, communities and societies.

Ishiguro can scrutinize their connections to a broader matrix of people. They can function, in a sense, as the control for tests. Though they can also convey great regret, as Stevens does upon the catastrophic realization that the work he revered was for a man with a horrific secret. Stevens’ existence becomes meaningless.

“Most of us hope to do the best we can do to the best of our abilities,” Ishiguro says. “And we hope and trust that it’ll be used well. I find that aspect of human beings fascinating. And I don’t think a lot of animals do it. Maybe wolves have some sense of duty to the pack. But it seems to me a lot of animals are content to eat things, breed and die. Human beings are not satisfied with that. We want to think we’ve made a great contribution to something. Or just to know that we did our best. Even criminals want to play their part in the gang. ‘I never cracked under police interrogation.’ Human beings have this sense of needing for their sense of dignity this idea of serving something bigger than ourselves. And that has always interested me.”

With Klara, he goes further into the deep of service than before, probing our interactions through the perspective of an entity specifically designed to observe and adapt. Klara also allows Ishiguro to convey aspects of this future without the character possessing any prejudices. The future of “Klara and the Sun” involves a permanent unemployed class dislodged from the workforce by artificial intelligence. Higher education has become an even more elite institution, such that parents are willing to take incredible risks to secure their children’s futures.

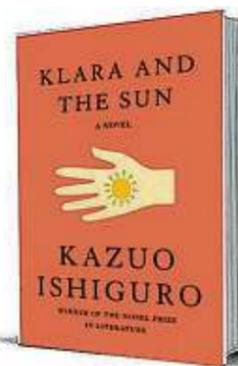
The author doesn’t profess to have “a clear vision on any of this, and the book doesn’t have a clear vision on any of this,” he says. “It’s just me looking into the fog of the future and making out odd little shapes and asking questions. ... But I do have the sense that we are on the cusp of big changes, perhaps comparable to when we entered the industrial age.”

So the shapes in the fog cause him some alarm. Ishiguro makes multiple references to futuristic “savage meritocracies” in which parents could make fraught decisions about children involving genetics.

As a kid born and raised after the Second World War, Ishiguro says the celebration at the end of the Cold War transformed into a stagnating complacency.

“There are more close-at-home problems like huge unemployment,” he says. “The possible hardwiring of current-day prejudices into the black boxes of AI decision-making is another major problem and another thing that might take away the traditional advantage that liberal democracy and free-market capitalism had over authoritarianism in centrally planned societies. ... We got comfortable living wealthier lives, and that advantage could be taken away by AI. Those things worry me more than robots rampaging down the street.”

“Klara, for me, was never supposed to be a threat. She’s a vehicle for looking at human beings. I’m more interested in what she sees than what she is.”



## Kazuo Ishiguro

**What:** Reading and conversation with Jim Shepard

**When:** 5 p.m. March 7

**Details:** \$30 includes a copy of the book; [inprinthouston.org](http://inprinthouston.org)

### ‘KLARA AND THE SUN’

By Kazuo Ishiguro

Knopf

320 pages, \$28

On multiple occasions, he has put his characters in some sort of service role: Stevens, the butler from “The Remains of the Day”; the young clones created for organ harvesting in “Never Let Me Go”; even Ryder, the famed pianist in Ishiguro’s most complicated book, “The Unconsoled,” tells his listeners “I’ll do my best for you.”

By charting characters such as these, who are committed to narrow focuses,

[andrew.dansby@chron.com](mailto:andrew.dansby@chron.com)

## FLIPPING THE SCRIPT

# Ahead of His Inprint Reading, Viet Thanh Nguyen Talks Literary Influences and Asian American Hate

The Pulitzer Prize winner will read from his long-awaited sequel, *The Committed*, on April 12.

By [Margaret Carmel](#) • 4/9/2021 at 11:10am

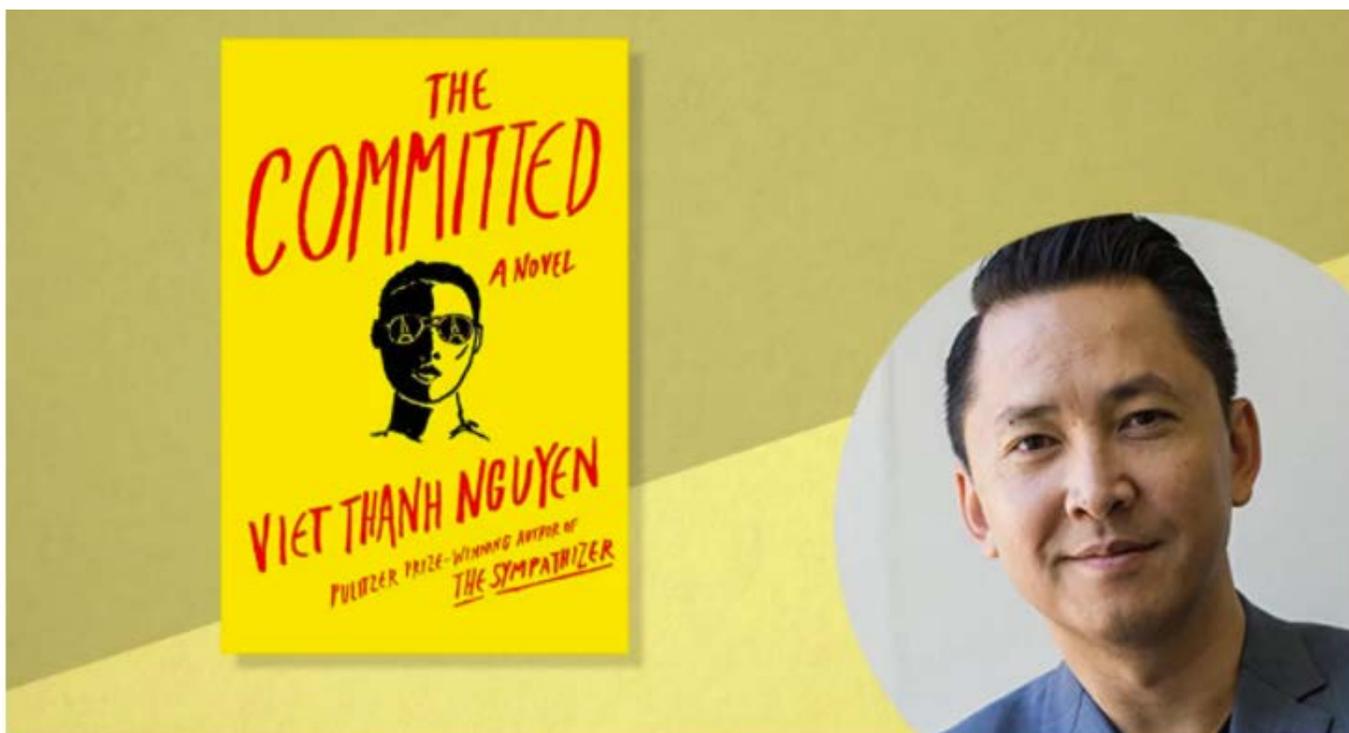


IMAGE: [COURTESY GROVE ATLANTIC](#)

## VIET THANH NGUYEN ISN'T DONE FLIPPING THE SCRIPT.

In 2016, the Vietnamese American author burst onto the literary scene with his debut, Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *The Sympathizer*. The book caught worldwide attention for its blend of literary fiction with a gripping spy story, set against the political intrigue of the Vietnam War. Its protagonist, who remains nameless, tells his story in the form of a forced confession of his acts as a Northern Vietnamese spy embedded with a South Vietnamese general.

And now, the story of the complex character trying to balance the two sides of his dual identity as a half-French, half-Vietnamese man in a divided country, continues. Nguyen's second novel, *The Committed*, which he will read from during his upcoming Inprint reading on April 12, finds our hero on a boat headed to France as a refugee after the fall of Saigon and contemplating a turn toward capitalism.

After Nguyen finished *The Sympathizer* and put it out into the world, he says the character still nagged him with lingering questions. "I wasn't done yet with the character of the sympathizer," he tells *Houstonia* in a phone interview ahead of his digital visit. "There was more to say about him."

The new book is "carefully written" so anyone can read *The Committed* without being familiar with its predecessor, but the themes of political satire, colonialism, and identity continue. "When we last saw him, he was a revolutionary who was disabused with the communist party," Nguyen says, "so I wanted to find out what a former revolutionary does that is still in search of a revolution."

Once he arrives in Paris, the narrator leaves his spy past behind, and the story morphs into a crime novel as our protagonist delves into drug dealing and other "bad choices" while he wrestles with being a Vietnamese man in France, the colonizer of his homeland. The topics are serious, but it's wrapped up in the entertaining trappings of genre fiction and satire as the main character pokes fun at western power.

In crafting the two books, Nguyen has blended the thrilling action of English novelists John le Carré and Graham Greene with the tradition of exploring identity from Black American novelists Toni Morrison and Ralph Ellison, whose seminal work *Invisible Man* was a major inspiration. He also took some cues from the

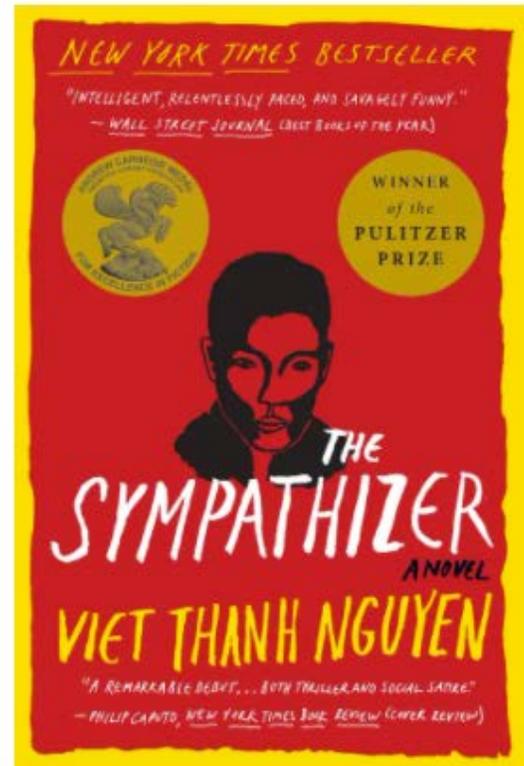


IMAGE: [COURTESY GROVE ATLANTIC](#)

playfulness of the children's fiction he's been reading with his 7-year-old son and convention-defying poetry.

"I love literary fiction, but sometimes it can be boring," he says. "And in genre fiction, the one thing you don't have is stories being boring. The thing that's interesting in spy and crime fiction is we have writers who want to spin a good yarn, but they're very aware of politics and history and that's certainly how I saw myself operating."

The unique mixture certainly struck a chord. *The Sympathizer* hit The New York Times Best Seller list and brought home the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for fiction, the Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction, and the Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature from the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association.

And last week, Nguyen announced the novel has been optioned for a TV series by A24.

This comes at a time when, even decades after the Vietnam War, the bulk of American writing and storytelling on the topic is told through the lens of the white soldiers who fought there and the divisive protests on the home front. Nguyen says he set out to write *The Sympathizer* as an "ambitious attack" against American perceptions of the conflict, which he sees as a piece in the long-running history of western countries instigating violence on the continent.

"We're very war-like people," he says of Americans. "In the second half of the 20th century, all of our wars were fought in Asia, and the Vietnam War was in many ways an extension of colonialism we took over from the French. Americans don't like to think about that history because to think of Americans as being complicit in expanding colonialism runs counter to some ideas Americans have about themselves."

As Nguyen is landing a TV deal and selling thousands of books telling stories of the Asian perspective from the Vietnamese perspective, anti-Asian American racism and violence is on the rise in the U.S. following the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. Nguyen says the spike of Black Lives Matter activism last summer amid the rising wave of negative attention on Asian American communities show the

importance of these two groups banding together instead of turning against each other to scramble for acceptance.

“It’s necessary for Black people and for Asian Americans to recognize this and have solidarity with each other and recognize the larger system that pits them against each other is a system of colonization and white supremacy,” he says. “That is hopefully evident in both novels. I don’t think they’re only about the Vietnam War or French colonialism.”

*April 12. \$5. Online. More info and tickets at [inprinthouston.org](http://inprinthouston.org).*

Filed under

[Books](#), [Book Reading](#), [Inprint](#), [Inprint Margaret Root Brown Reading Series](#)

# Viet Thanh Nguyen is among the authors appearing at book events this week

Ana Khan | 2 days ago



Pulitzer Prize winner Viet Thanh Nguyen will read from his work as part of as part of Inprint' Margaret Root Brown Reading Series.

FICTION

# Viet Thanh Nguyen follows up Pulitzer winner with 'Committed'

By Andrew Dansby  
STAFF WRITER

In numerous little ways, Viet Thanh Nguyen sparks familiarity through his fiction, sending little tendrils that feel familiar out to readers. All the while he tells a story about life and death, communism and capitalism, colonialism and culture, as we codify it, that feels bracing and new.

Nguyen's "The Committed" is a follow-up to "The Sympathizer," his Pulitzer Prize-winning debut novel. They're connected in that they follow a half-Vietnamese, half-French protagonist who finds himself in different places around the world, struggling and conniving to get through cultures profiting from and disrupted by war. In the last book, the unnamed Sympathizer was a sleeper agent in the United States, a modernized take on the spy novel. In "The Committed," an update on the crime novel genre, he becomes a Parisian drug dealer.

"I wanted to know what happens to the revolutionary whose revolution has failed," Nguyen says. "What happens next? There's a genre in literature of the disillusioned revolutionary ... I didn't want him to run to the United States and start happily eating Happy Meals at McDonald's. It's a continuation of a personal adventure into the self. In this case, France.

"Based on hate mail from the last book I wrote, I wondered who was left to offend. In this case, it was the French."

The French are welcome to take offense, as their role in a problematic 20th-century Vietnam has largely been relegated to the margins of history. Nguyen acknowledges a half century of American pop culture that has attempted to make sense of a war in Vietnam with dubious roots, even among dubious wartime endeavors.

"The French got off lucky," he says. "Sure, the Americans did terrible things in Vietnam, but at least they recorded them in full color, with newspapers, TV, movies. Americans created the image of a bad war. The French did terrible things, and you don't have that full-color visual record. The photos depict colonial life as romantic."

Nguyen's early life was permeated with forced movement. His family fled North Vietnam when he was a newborn. When he was just 4, Saigon fell, and the family fled to the United States. Here, he was separated from his parents. They were reunited and settled in California, where Nguyen, who's now 50, grew up as many American children born in the 1970s did: in a culture trying to make sense of that conflict. He watched the movies that tried to address what he calls "a critique of this American mythology." And he also saw those that sought to do something else.

I recounted an old communications professor's belief that "Rambo," the second of the Sylvester Stallone "First Blood" movies, was one of the most important movies about the war in Vietnam because it was so naked in its messaging: The film sought to make a victory out of a conflict that ended poorly for all involved, particularly the American armed forces.

"It speaks to how I was sort of brainwashed at the time," Nguyen says. "I remember I sort of enjoyed it. But I now see that naked expression of American machismo and resentment at having lost this war. And if you watch it now, Rambo is helped by this beautiful mixed-race Vietnamese woman. 'Co' is her only name, and she's wearing full makeup while running around in the jungle. And she's killed by the Viet Cong and dies in Rambo's arms, her lips glistening with



Carlos Avila Gonzalez / Staff photographer

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Viet Thanh Nguyen has followed up "The Sympathizer" with "The Committed."

lip gloss. It's an absurd creation of American pop culture."

Which isn't to say Nguyen seeks a form of gritty verité storytelling with his novels. The first lines of "The Sympathizer" are: "I am a spy, a sleeper, a spook, a man of two faces."

He approaches the novel as a writer informed by decades of tradition but also finds the soft spots that exist when a genre is allowed to codify. The recent passing of Larry McMurtry underscores a distant comparison: Much in the way McMurtry tried to subvert a romanticized notion of the Western with "Lonesome Dove," Nguyen undermined codified and embellished spy novel certainties with "The Sympathizer," suggesting the old lines between good and evil were far muddier than presented.

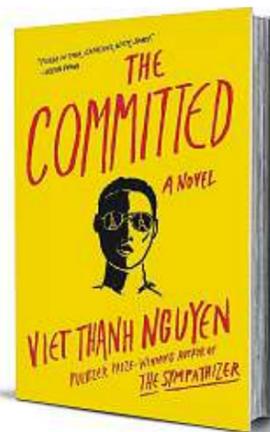
"The Committed" pivots from that point toward the crime-novel genre.

One needn't read "The Sympathizer" to appreciate "The Committed." It helps, but Nguyen deftly threads backstory into the newer book. Plot points prove secondary to thematic points, which are sharp: that our age of information allows greater awareness of a global connectivity in which the acts of a people have dramatic effects at home and abroad. Rally around or against the term "globalization," but these books find a folly in suggesting the concept is new. Nations have for centuries looked beyond their borders and taken actions that have repercussions.

So "The Committed," like its predecessor, isn't exactly a book about Vietnam or the United States or France. Rather it's about the smallness of the world. Nguyen points out the hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese immigrants who poured into the States in the mid-'70s.

"Many have become part of a larger American success story," he says. "But there are still struggles for Asian Americans. They're in the news, especially recently. And there's also this idea that we change who we don't wish to rescue and welcome. Being a refugee doesn't necessarily give you greater empathy for other people. We see that with the southern border."

Early in Nguyen's crime novel, his narrator mentions his killing of two men. "They were innocent or mostly innocent, and I was guilty or mostly



## Viet Thanh Nguyen virtual event

When: 7 p.m. April 12

Details: \$5; [inprinthouston.org](http://inprinthouston.org)

### 'THE COMMITTED'

By Viet Thanh Nguyen  
Grove Press  
345 pages, \$27

guilty." A moral opacity obscures the line, which is a brilliant distillation of how we wish to sidestep blame, when cultures should share it equally. It echoes an ambiguity found in Albert Camus' writing, just one of numerous points of reference that come up in Nguyen's work, though none of them prove a pinpoint reference for his work.

His Sympathizer – who seems rootless – and the humor threaded throughout the book both recall Kurt Vonnegut, though tonally "The Committed" doesn't particularly connect to that writer. Nguyen does find some value in "the way he conveyed the incredible devastation of the bombing of Dresden. It pushed him to create a novel that pushed the boundaries of realism. ... Sometimes you take chances and experiment with different strategies to convey a dislocation you've undergone. From a writerly point of view, it can be fun, these terrible things taking place with a playful story and text that allows you to work with that."

Nguyen's titles faintly echo one by Fyodor Dostoevsky, whose "The Pos-

sessed" was later translated differently into "Demons." One is active, one passive, but both suggest entities with strong exterior circumstances impressed upon them. Nguyen recognizes his Sympathizer – who is central to both stories, yet still mysterious and unknowable after two novels – has been forced out of places he calls home. But he also wants the character to be an active part of the books in hopes of framing a different story in a field of literature that is growing increasingly less insular, based on a few publishing hubs like New York and London. The Sympathizer's story – which will have a third part – spans three continents so far. In presenting jarring transitions from one place to another, it also dulls regional distinctions that lead to a sense of otherness. Colonialism, capitalism, socialism and other -isms have a dubious track record. Nguyen's books call out their many shortcomings while also finding more basic connections between people. So his Sympathizer is a complicated entity: problematic morally, questionable as a reliable narrator. But quite reliable as a vessel for making us think about the ways we organize ourselves.

"The Vietnamese and Asians are often deposited in the American imagination as victims," he says. "And in literature, people have picked up on that for years. These novels were designed to reject those terms. There's some agency that I felt was crucial to acknowledge among Asians and Vietnamese. It's a complicated thing. Still, a victim says, 'Bad things were done to me.' When you have agency, you're potentially at risk for doing terrible things.

"American culture understands this, which is why there's a rich history of heroes but also antiheroes in popular culture. So I hope there's a complex humanity at the heart of these novels. The Sympathizer is a complicated person. He's a victim, and he's more than that. He's done terrible things, and he's witnessed terrible things. If readers can acknowledge that complexity, that's what I'm looking for. And it's what I've come to expect from stories by people of color in this country."

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## 9 showstopping Houston plays and performances to stream and catch in April

By [Tarra Gaines](#)

Apr 6, 2021, 9:50 am

**A** year into remote theater and Houston performing arts companies have learned to get creative.

Yes, we're still streaming some dramatic and comic theater goodness, but April also offers a plethora of different performances modes from live actors on your front lawn to virtual conferencing with a semi-omnipotent nun.

For some spring variety, we've also got some dramatic opera, dance and poetry on our must-see list. And if you manage to get through it all, be sure to check out this special "[Thank You, Houston](#)" message from the city's Actors' Equity Association (plus one, likely non-union, guinea pig).

### **Jericho Brown reading from the [Inprint Margaret Root Brown Reading Series](#) (live streaming April 26)**

Not theater, but we can't let poetry month go by without highlighting the poetic return of Jericho Brown, the 2020 Pulitzer Prize in poetry winner. Earning his PhD from the University of Houston Creative Writing Program, Brown won an Inprint C. Glenn Cambor Fellowships and spent time teaching writing workshops for senior citizens in the Fifth Ward.

Brown comes home, remotely at least, to share poems from his most recent and acclaimed collection *The Tradition*.

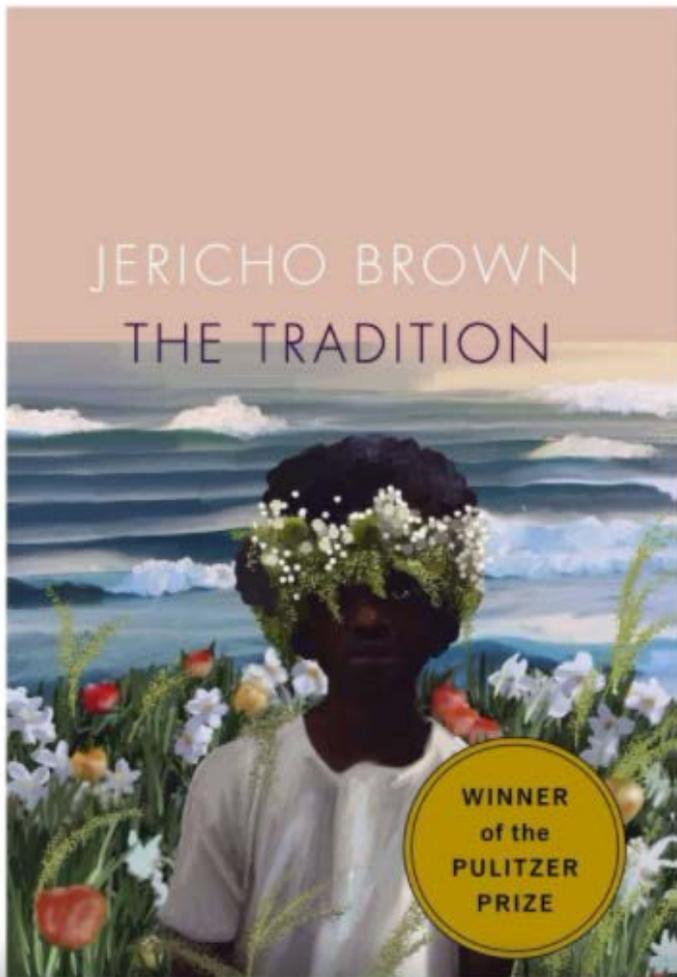
BOOKS

# Inprint hosts poetry event with Pulitzer winner Jericho Brown

Inprint hosts poetry event with Pulitzer winner Jericho Brown



Andrew Dansby | April 15, 2021 Updated: April 15, 2021, 11:22 am



Jericho Brown, winner of the 2020 Pulitzer Prize in poetry, will read from "the Tradition" April 26 as part of Inprint's 40th anniversary celebration.

Photo: Collage

Jericho Brown returns to Houston for a virtual reading tied to National Poetry Month. He'll read from "The Tradition" and his other works as part of Inprint Houston's Margaret Root Brown Reading Series.

A Shreveport, La., native and an alumnus and former professor at the University of Houston, Brown has been publishing his poems for well over a decade now, earning a Whiting Award and an American Book Award, as well as a Guggenheim Fellowship.

But Brown's 2019 collection, "The Tradition," drew even greater notice. The book won the 2020 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry.

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### **Jericho Brown reading**

**When:** 7 p.m. April 26

**Details:** \$5; [inprinthouston.org](https://www.inprinthouston.org)

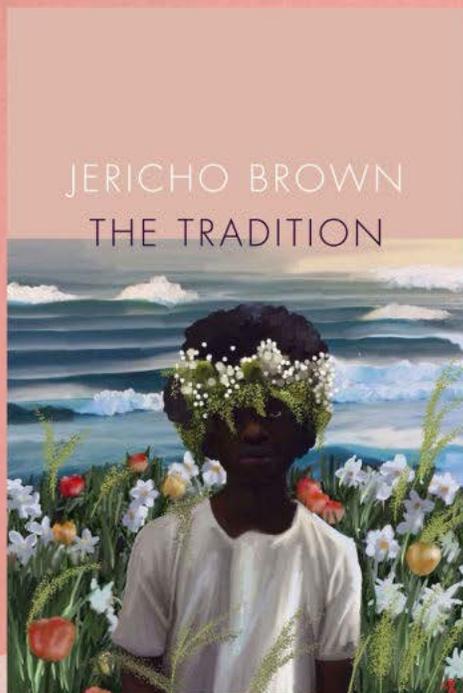
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POETIC GENIUS

## Jericho Brown Talks Police Brutality, Time in Houston Ahead of Inprint Reading

The UH alum will read for his Pulitzer Prize-winning poetry collection, *The Tradition*, on April 26.

By [Margaret Carmel](#) • 4/23/2021 at 6:00am



**TO MANY, JERICHO BROWN'S POETRY SPEAKS TO THIS** particular moment of civil rights activism condemning police brutality. But that's not all there is to his work, though.

Brown, 45, hit his literary zenith last year when he took home the 2020 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry for his third collection, *The Tradition*, an earthquakingly masterful work that bends the traditional conventions of poetic form to confront many forms of evil in our society, from sexual violence to mass murder and, yes, the deaths of Black Americans at the hands of police.

In a conversation conducted the day after the Derek Chauvin [verdict](#), Brown is quick to point out there are just as many, if not more, poems in his collection about family and erotic love as there are about police brutality. His work, he says, captures the whole spectrum of his life experience, not just how he moves through the world as a Black man in the South.

"It's always fascinating to me that I wrote a poem about flowers, about the natural world, about the environment, and that, no matter how much I write about that, folks can't see that because, of course, I have to write about that along with my race," he says ahead of his upcoming Inprint reading on April 26. "I believe that we're capable of holding more than one thing in our hands at a time.

One of those elements he's always holding in his hands and heart is his time in the Bayou City—a time that, like his poetry, was filled with both wonder and heartbreak. The Louisiana native vividly recalls the night in graduate school when he was stopped by police and thrown onto the hood of his car to be searched following a drag show at JR's Bar. Why he was stopped, he's still not sure, but the experience is one in a long line of bad experiences he and other Black Americans he knows have had with the police.

But it was also in Houston, and especially at the Inprint readings he frequently attended while earning his Ph.D. in creative writing and literature at the University of Houston, that Brown encountered many famous writers, including Mary Oliver and John Updike, and continued to build the foundations of his poetry.

Brown, who currently leads Emory University's creative writing program, has come a long way since he left Houston—"kicking and screaming," he jokes—following his graduation in 2007. In addition to a Pulitzer, he's received the American Book and National Book Critics Circle awards and has been named a Guggenheim fellow; his latest collection was also a National Book Award finalist.

But it's because of his Houston memories, both good and bad, that the poet says he

never misses an opportunity to return to the vibrant city where he came into his own as a writer. Making this visit even more special is the fact that it's his first time attending an Inprint event as the guest of honor (he has previously appeared as a featured salon reader during Inprint's 2013 Poets & Writers Ball).

Part of Brown wishes he'd delayed this full-circle moment until he could experience it in person and be part of the synergistic environment he remembers so fondly. But he wants to be a part of bringing art to people who need it most in these trying times.

"Now more than ever people have been ... in need of poetry," he says. "The poets have become the superheroes of this moment because we are supplying people with what they didn't know they needed."

*April 26. \$5. Online. More info and tickets at [inprinthouston.org](http://inprinthouston.org).*

Filed under [Inprint](#), [Inprint Margarett Root Brown Reading Series](#), [Poetry](#), [Readings & Lectures](#)

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Show Comments

| THINGS TO DO |

## Best Virtual Bets: Fashion, *Pretty Fire*, and *The Sound of Music*

NATALIE DE LA GARZA | MAY 6, 2021 | 4:00AM

**Jhumpa Lahiri**, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning collection of short stories titled *The Interpreter*, will be featured on Monday, May 10, at 7 p.m., concluding the [2020/2021 Inprint Margaret Root Brown Reading Series](#). Lahiri will join author Yaa Gyasi in conversation and give a short reading from *Whereabouts*, her first novel since 2013 and [the first novel Lahiri's written in Italian \(and translated to English\)](#). The book, “a muted portrait of urban solitude,” spends “a year in the inner life of a solitary woman in an unnamed European city.” You can purchase a \$25 ticket to view the livestream [here](#), and note that each ticket comes with a hardcover copy of *Whereabouts*.

## BOOKS

## Jhumpa Lahiri is among the authors appearing at book events this week

Featured authors for this week's book discussions include Ragnar Jonasson, Jeffery Deaver and Ashley Elston.

Ana Khan | May 9, 2021 Updated: May 10, 2021, 9:29 am



Inprint Margarett Root Brown Reading Series presents author Jhumpa Lahiri.

Photo: Liana Miuccio

### MONDAY

**Jhumpa Lahiri:** Author will give a short reading from her new novel, "Whereabouts," followed by a conversation with American Book Award winner Yaa Gyasi, as part of Inprint's Margarett Root Brown Reading Series. The event will be streamed on Inprint's website; tickets, \$25, include a copy of the book. 7 p.m., [inprinthouston.org](https://www.inprinthouston.org)