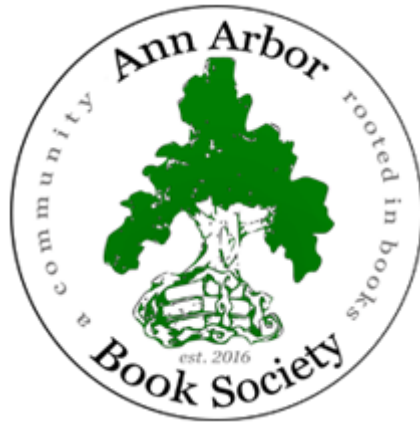


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May Newsletter

a2books.org

May Book Event Highlights

Wednesday, May 2nd at 7 pm: [Community High Poetry Class Reading](#), Bookbound Bookstore, 1729 Plymouth Rd.

Friday, May 4th at 8 pm: [An evening with author and comedian H. Jon Benjamin](#) sponsored by Nicola's Books, Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty.

Saturday, May 5th from 10 am to 10 pm: [Free Comic Book Day](#) at Vault of Midnight, 219 S. Main St.

Wednesday, May 16th at 7 pm: Skyline High School literary publication, [Teen Spirit, Issue # 6](#), at Literati Bookstore, 124 E. Washington

Saturday, May 19th 10 am to 4 pm and Sunday, May 20th from 1 pm to 4 pm: [Friends of the Ann Arbor District Library Special Sale](#), AADL Downtown Branch Multi-Purpose Room, 343 S. Fifth Ave.

Friday, May 18th at 7 pm: [Ann Arbor Youth Poet Laureate Commencement Performance](#). AADL Downtown Branch, 343 S. Fifth Ave.

For more information on these and other May events, visit our [calendar](#)!

Event Photo Highlight



Michael Eric Dyson, author of *Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon to White America*, appears at Main Street Church located in the Clocktower Commons in downtown Chelsea on Saturday, April 28th as part of the Midwest Literary Walk. (Photo courtesy of Monica-Amit Misra)



On April 2nd, Aunt Agatha's owners Robin and Jamie Agnew [announced](#) they will be closing the doors of their well-loved bookstore on August 26th, after a successful run of 26 years. We recently had the honor of connecting with Robin to learn a little about her experience opening and owning a bookstore, and what comes next.

Tori Booker: For readers who may dream about opening a bookstore, can you describe the process from conceptualization to opening day? How did you pick the space and name, determine a layout/design for the store (why purple?!) and stock your inventory?

Robin Agnew: We didn't do a lot of studies, etc. We had lived in Minneapolis where there's a wonderful store there, Uncle Edgar's, that sells new & used mysteries. I loved shopping there, and the owner introduced me to some favorite authors. His kid was often in the store in a playpen (and so was ours, later). When we moved here and Jamie had worked at Borders for a while, we knew we wanted to open our own place, and since I loved mysteries so much it seemed like a good fit. In the early 90's, mystery bookstores were very strong and lots were opening. For the name, we basically feminized Uncle Edgar's and used the name of my favorite mystery writer. We looked at a couple spaces but the rent on Fourth was low and the space had just been renovated by our landlord, Ed Shaffran. As to the color, the carpet was kind of suggested by the landlord, but I wanted white shelves. A friend of my parents is a decorator and I was telling him about it and he said, "NOT white, they must be aubergine!" Well, purple is a color I like so we went with purple....close to aubergine. He was right, too, because white would have gotten so dirty, and the purple is distinctive.

As to stocking the store...we opened with about 5,000 books, and we are closing with around 30,000. Jamie had learned about ordering new books from working at Borders but the used books were something different to figure out. We put up posters and drove all over town picking up a box of Agatha Christies here, a box of Sue Grafton there...one guy showed up at our house in a Gremlin with a car full of pulpy series novels. Kind of junky at that time but now collectible. Jamie went to sales all the time when we first opened and then people started bringing their books in, or buying them and bringing them back for credit and then buying more. I did donate my own Rex Stout books which I now regret though I expect I'll be taking some home with me. We have a couple book scouts who go to more sales and they can often find stuff we're looking for. The mark up is obviously better on used books than new ones. Best used book story: I met a lady in a parking lot over on Maple somewhere and she had a box of hardcovers she wanted to get rid of. I offered to pay her and she didn't want anything for them. Well, in the box was a first edition *C is for Corpse* by Sue Grafton - we sold it the next day for a couple hundred bucks. But that's certainly the exception. Mostly you're picking up books for 50 cents or a dollar and turning them over for \$3.50 (or when we first opened, \$2.25). I had one lady tell me I was a capitalist pig because I only offered her 50 cents apiece for her books! I had to laugh because that's so ridiculous - you don't go into bookselling to get rich.

Tori: You have hosted so many authors over the past 26 years and several have recognized the impact your support made on their careers. Who stands out for you and why? Which authors may have surprised you because they were not what you expected? All names may be omitted for confidentiality's sake. :)

Robin: I kind of feel like we have been really lucky because when we opened it was kind of a crime fiction renaissance. Bill Clinton had just been elected, and he liked mysteries and even cited the names of mystery authors he liked which was a big boost for the genre. And authors like Michael Connelly, Robert Crais, Ian Rankin, Harlan Coben, Elizabeth George, Patricia Cornwell and John Grisham all started their careers around then, so what a wonderful moment to be a part of crime fiction. I'm not sure of the impact I've had on the careers of anyone but I feel lucky we were in on first books and events with Kent Krueger, Steve Hamilton, Julia Spencer-Fleming, Louise Penny...I never will forget Steve walking into the store to introduce himself after his book had just gotten published. He and Kent have been incredibly loyal. And of course we have hosted many Loren Estleman events - he's our homey! I hope I was helpful to Julia Spencer-Fleming and more recently Carrie Smith but I can't take credit - these are good writers, I'm just a part of their path.

Most mystery writers are incredibly nice people, generous to each other and wonderful to deal with. Through the years some have even stayed in my home...Denise Hamilton, Nancy Atherton, Libby Hellman, Jeanne Dams, Julia Spencer-Fleming, Judy Clemens...Laura Lippman used my computer and stole some fig newtons from the pantry. Only a very few have been obnoxious - two cozy writers came through who were drunk at their event and had obviously not planned what to say, and they were pretty imperious and demanding in general...and we had another pretty well known Michigan author who tried to get out of a signing three days out. It was when we first opened and I held him to it - when I asked him what mysteries he liked he said: "I don't read that crap."

Tori: The field of mystery/crime fiction has grown and evolved a great deal over the past 26 years. Have any genres surprised you by their success? What are your favorite and least favorite genres?

Robin: I was initially surprised by the growing success of international fiction - it may help that we are in a university town. I'm not especially a fan of Steig Larssen or Henning Mankell but I do admire and enjoy writers like Karin Fossom, Jusi Adler-Olsen, Colin Cotterill, Cara Black and Andrea Cammilleri. There were a couple authors who just took off and it was fun to see...two I especially remember, and I think it was the same summer, were Harlan Coben and Lee Child. I would introduce people to those guys and they would hurry back for more. My favorites - I'm a huge fan of traditional British detectives so I have really loved reading books by Deborah Crombie, Elizabeth George, Peter Robinson, Ann

Cleeves...and I love the golden age writers and re-read them constantly. I have a Patricia Wentworth book on my nightstand right now. At the moment true crime is kind of trending which has surprised me a bit - there are a couple podcasts out there and we can't keep Ann Rule's *The Stranger Beside Me* on the shelf through the weekend. More frustrating are those authors you are passionate about who never quite make it or who are dropped by their publishers - fresh heartbreak every time!

Tori: How can fans of Aunt Agatha's and of mystery/crime fiction stay informed and connected after August 26th?

Robin: While still in the planning stages we are going to be working on a review blog focusing on women mystery authors (my passion) and true crime (Jamie's passion). We hope to keep the book club going and I think we'll be around on social media just like we are now. And we'll be selling our used inventory on ABE books.

Tori Booker is on the board of directors of the Ann Arbor Book Society and a longtime patron of Aunt Agatha's.

Book Ends

Audiobooks for Indies!



Audiobook sales are on the rise as more and more people combine commuting, working out, and other tasks with getting through our reading lists. (I like to listen while cleaning my kitchen.) And if there is one name synonymous with audiobooks, it is Audible, an Amazon company. Since you're

Little Free Library



Vicky Henry is a retired Community High English teacher who was inspired to get her own Little Free Library after visiting several others

reading this newsletter, you may be wondering if there is a way to combine your love of independent bookstores with your growing audiobook habit. I am here to tell you that yes, there is! Enter Libro.fm.

Independently owned and launched in 2015, Libro.fm partners with independent bookstores across the U.S. (including 22 stores in Michigan; 3 in Ann Arbor*) to offer over 90,000 titles that are DRM-free, meaning you don't have to use the app to listen to your books and can download the mp3s (it also works with Kindle). Books can be purchased independently of a monthly subscription, but if you do choose to buy the \$14.99 subscription service, you get one audiobook of your choice per month, plus 30% off any further audiobook purchases, and each purchase supports the independent bookstore of your choice.

I have been using Libro.fm for over a year now, and I love it! I am continuously surprised how quickly they get some of the Indiebound bestsellers, such as *Pachinko* by Min Jin Lee, *Lincoln in the Bardo* by George Saunders, and *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas, all of which I now have on audiobook. The sound quality is crisp and clear, and I do find the multiple speed options occasionally useful when I just have to get through a scene faster.

The first month of a membership is only \$0.99. By choosing to shop at local, independent bookstores, you've already shown your desire to support your local community.

with her three grandchildren. Her Little Free Library can be found at 1324 Pomona Rd., on Ann Arbor's west side.

Rachel Pastiva: When did you put up your Little Free Library, and where did it come from?

Vicki Henry: Three years ago my son Joel Henry-Fisher (an artist and carpenter) built my LFL and installed it. He and his children have donated many books to this library.

Rachel: What inspired you to create one?

Vicky: I was inspired by how much fun it was for my grandchildren and me to visit the Little Free Libraries around town. Also, I love books and reading, so I thought it would be fun to have one.

Rachel: What did you envision the library's role would be in your neighborhood?

Vicky: Since a lot of people walk, walk their dogs, or walk to and from Wines, Forsythe, and Skyline up and down my street, I thought it would attract many different readers. I thought my neighbors would enjoy it and that people would stop to chat by the library. I have a little gnome garden at the base of my library and I love seeing little kids checking it out.

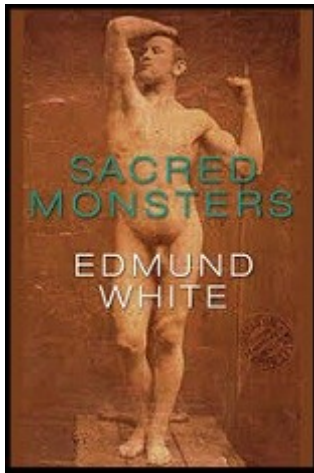
Rachel: Have you discovered any

Libro.fm is another way to
#chooseindie.

--*Crysta Coburn*

**The three Ann Arbor bookstores you can
support are Crazy Wisdom, Literati, and
Nicola's.*

On the Shelf



Sacred Monsters By Edmund White

Smashwords Edition, \$24.95
First published, November 2011

“When I was fifteen I fell in love with this statue –not as an art fancier or potential collector or historian, but the way a lover would. Literally.” So begins Edmund White’s essay on Auguste Rodin, “The Bronze Age” in his 2011 book, *Sacred Monsters*. A collection of twenty-two essays on some of the most compelling art and literary figures of the late 19th and 20th centuries, *Sacred Monsters* is considerably more personal essay and biography rather than critique; a distinction White himself acknowledges and is comfortable embracing. “I have more confidence than most critics do in the biographical approach ... the evolution

great new books left from users of your library?

Vicky: I found Dorothy Allison’s *Cavedweller*. I had not read that novel and I love Allison’s writing.

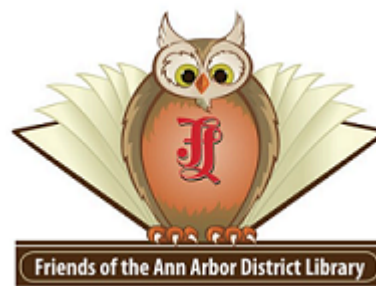
Rachel: What has been the most surprising aspect of being a steward of a LFL?

Vicky: Any time I start to worry that the library needs books, more books appear. I have also had people add animals and gnomes to the garden.

Rachel: Have you received any feedback from users of your library?

Vicky: My neighbors have thanked me and told me how much they enjoy watching the flow of books. I have had specific requests for books from tween readers, so I look for those books when I shop used book sales. The response has been overwhelmingly positive. My mailman takes books and a taxi driver visits the library, too!

Congratulations FAADL!



of an artistic career can best be examined through biography.”

White derives the title of his book from the French term, “monstre sacre” – a celebrity of such exceptional renown they are almost above reproach (think Bob Hope or as White put it “an enormous century-old goldfish swimming about in a murky pool on the palace grounds”). White is no iconoclast. He deals neither strong blows nor other trauma to his subject. White is an observer and a re-teller of tales. He describes Marguerite Duras’ alcoholism bluntly yet matter-of-fact in “In Love With Duras” and pulls no punches in noting Edith Wharton’s antisemitism in “The House of Edith”. White simply pulls back a thin veil on his subjects and reveals the complexities and imperfections of these complex people.

Edmund White was the recipient of the Lambda Literary Foundation’s 2009 Pioneer Award. Much of his writing, autobiographical or otherwise, has been of LGBTQ subjects. In his 2007 autobiography *My Lives* he writes, “The most important things in our intimate lives can’t be discussed with strangers, except in books”. Of his twenty-two subjects in *Sacred Monsters*, fifteen are gay, bisexual, closeted or conflicted about their sexuality. This is not a book “about” LGBTQ people. White delves into his subject’s sexuality where it informs and to the extent it provides context for the artist’s subject matter or sensibilities. Of photographer Robert Mapplethorpe, White notes the most formative years for Mapplethorpe’s work (1969-1979) were also the most turbulent in the battle for gay liberation. Mapplethorpe himself said, “My life

This May, the Friends of the Ann Arbor District Library (FAADL) is celebrating 65 years! Since 1953, FAADL has helped support the services and activities of the Ann Arbor District Library. With the help of many dedicated, longtime volunteers, FAADL has been turning our community's book donations into funds that directly support popular programs including 2nd grader library visits and the Summer Games. Help celebrate this special milestone by attending the [reception](#) to honor this remarkable organization on Friday, May 18th from 6:30 pm to 8 pm on the second floor of the Ann Arbor District Library's Downtown Branch.

In order to ensure another 65 years of success for FAADL, consider volunteering some of your time! They are always looking for book lovers to staff the bookshop and help process donations. Visit FAADL's [Contact Us](#) page to sign up for volunteer opportunities.

For more information on the history of the Friends of the Ann Arbor District Library, check out our [August 2017](#) newsletter!

Save the Date!

Sunday, July 15th: [Detroit BookFest](#)

Saturday, July 14th & Sunday, July 15th: [FAADL Bag Sale](#)

Friday, September 7th through Sunday, September 9th: [AAUW Used Book Sale](#)

began in the summer of 1969. Before that, I didn't exist."

White describes his adolescent infatuation with Rodin's bronze figure as his "introduction to the ideal and excruciatingly improbable realm of art". In *Sacred Monsters*, he introduces us to the sometimes improbable but nonetheless very real life and times of some very compelling people.

--Kevin Sharp

Common Language Bookseller

Sunday, September 9th: [Kerrytown BookFest](#)

Snapshot of the Past



Jamie, Robin, and Margaret Agnew, October 5, 1992, Ann Arbor News, courtesy of Ann Arbor District Library.



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Ann Arbor Book Society

P.O. Box 7176

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