

CRASH COURSE

IN ADVENTURE
STORIES &
WESTERNS

NoveList



Panelists



Jessica
Trotter

(she/her)

*Collection Development
Specialist*
Capital Area District
Libraries



David
Wright

(he/him)

*Reader Services
Librarian*
Seattle Public
Library



Halle
Eisenman

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*Content Development
Manager*
NoveList

The top ten books
published this month that
librarians across the country love.



libraryreads.org

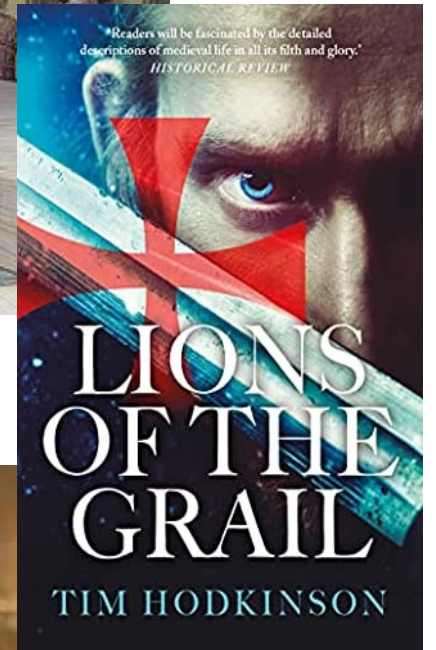
What is Adventure?

- **FAST PACED & ACTION-PACKED!**
- Emphasis is on events themselves, rather than the space between events (the suspense).
- Readers who favor adventure (& related genres) **may express impatience** with more gradual storytelling styles, however suspenseful they may seem.



Something or Somewhere Extraordinary

- Not here: ***Elsewhere***. Journeys, voyages, quests, missions.
- Often set in **exotic locales**, with vivid world-building, and/or involve curious or **potent artifacts**.
- Thrillers gain power from **relatability**: "This could've been me."
- Adventure highlights **otherness**: Readers enjoy an "escape" from the everyday.

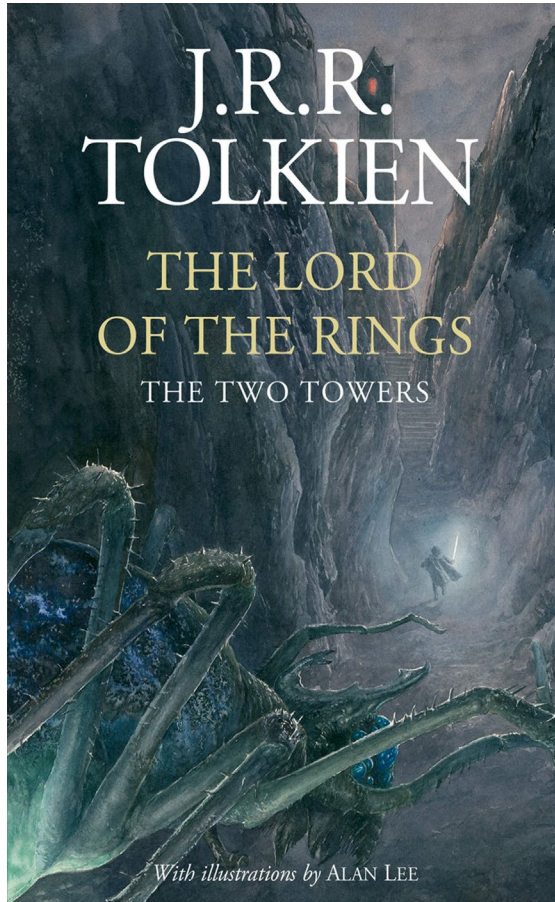


I'm Holding Out for a Hero!

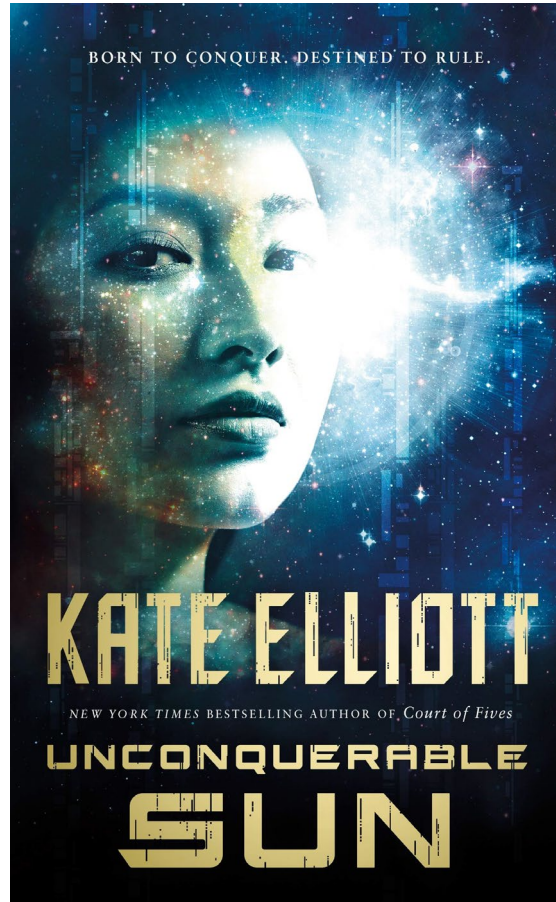
- **Strong, capable, skilled**, even if reluctant.
- Charismatic, ideal.
- Simplicity, **moral clarity**.
- The **Good Guy**, (& yes, it's mostly guys.)
- Not to be confused w/ the **Bad Guys**: no "unreliable narrators" need apply.
- Dirk Pitt, James Bond, Cotton Malone, Tucker Wayne, Ethan Gage, Alexander Hawke, Painter Crowe, Finn Ryan, Richard Savage, Nina Wilde, Mac Bolan.



Adventure siblings (or offspring?)



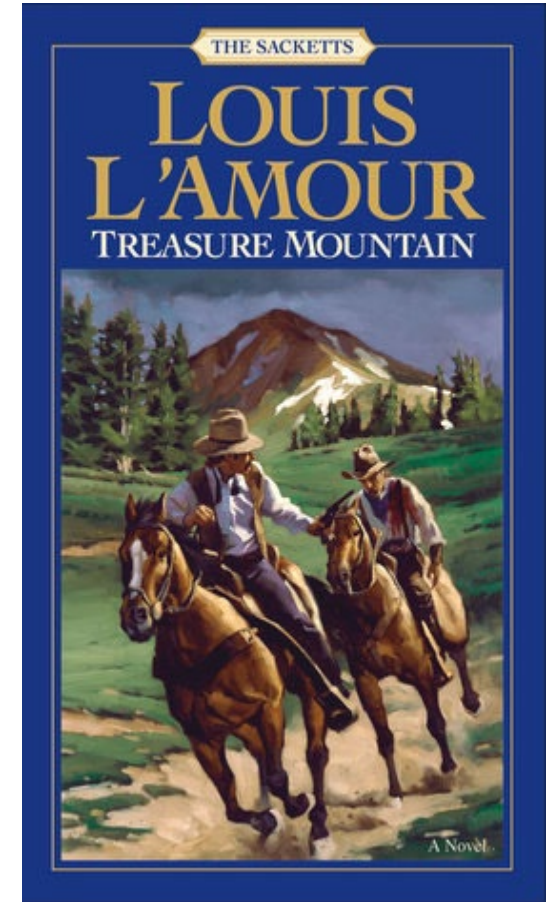
Quest Fantasy



Space Opera



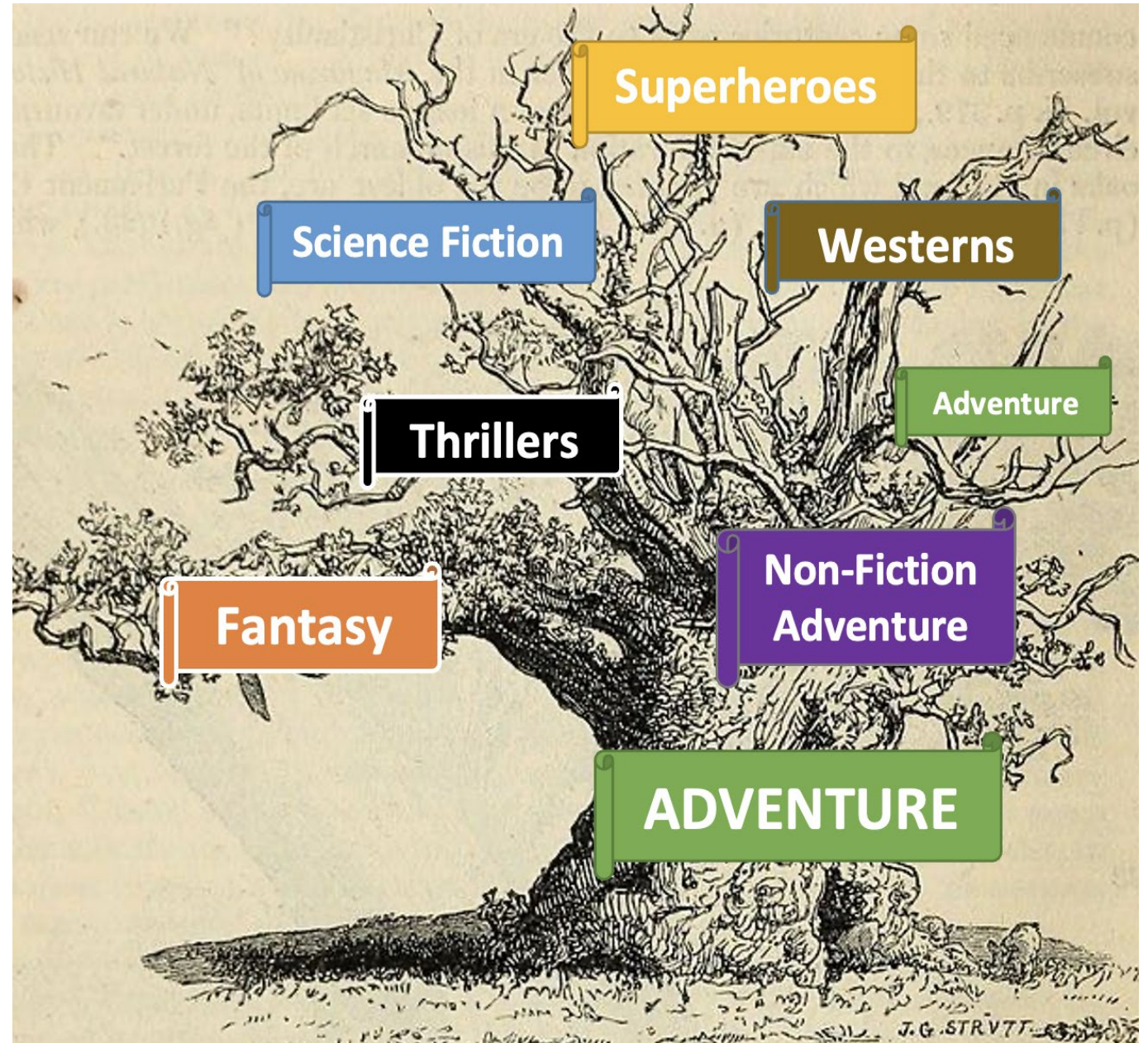
Superhero Comics



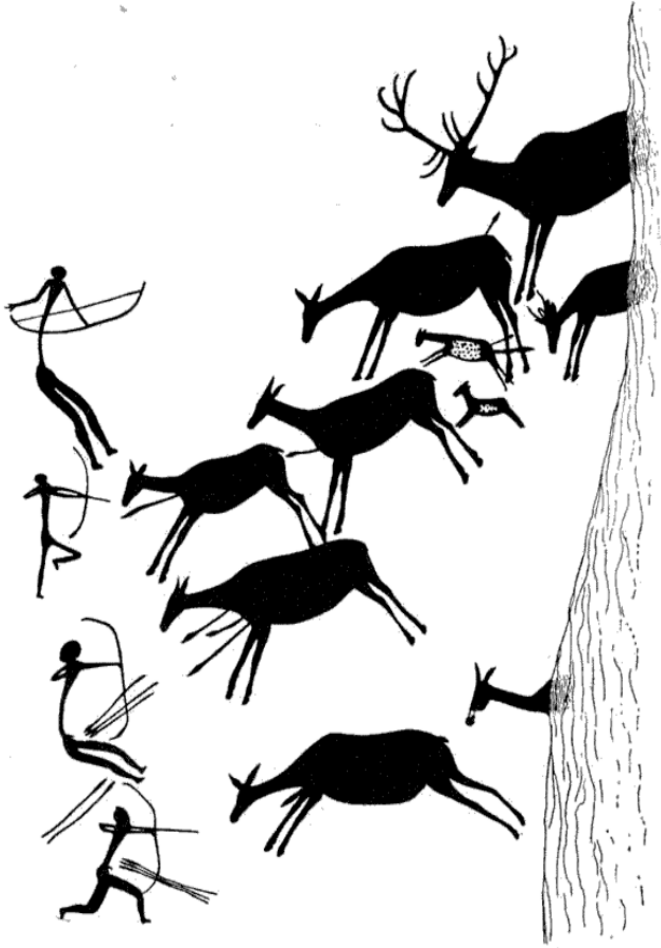
Westerns

Adventure Family Tree

Adventure
by any
& every
other name...



Adventure: The *Original* Genre?



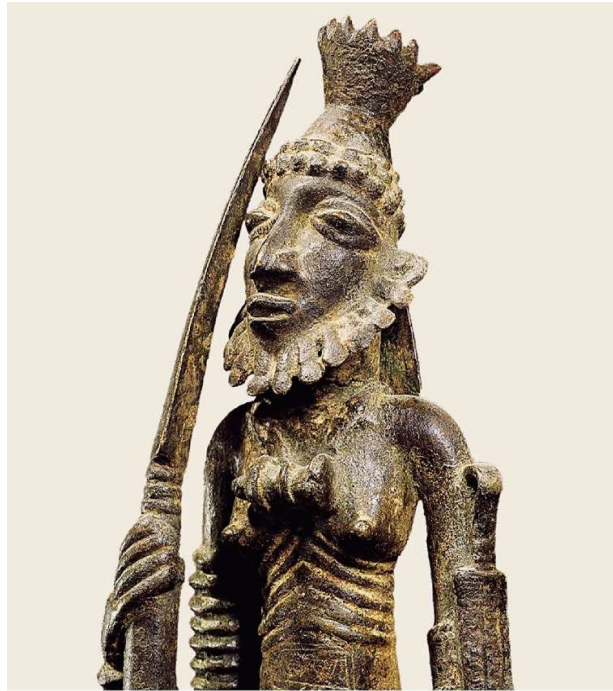
Adventure: Epically Global



PENGUIN CLASSICS

The Mahābhārata

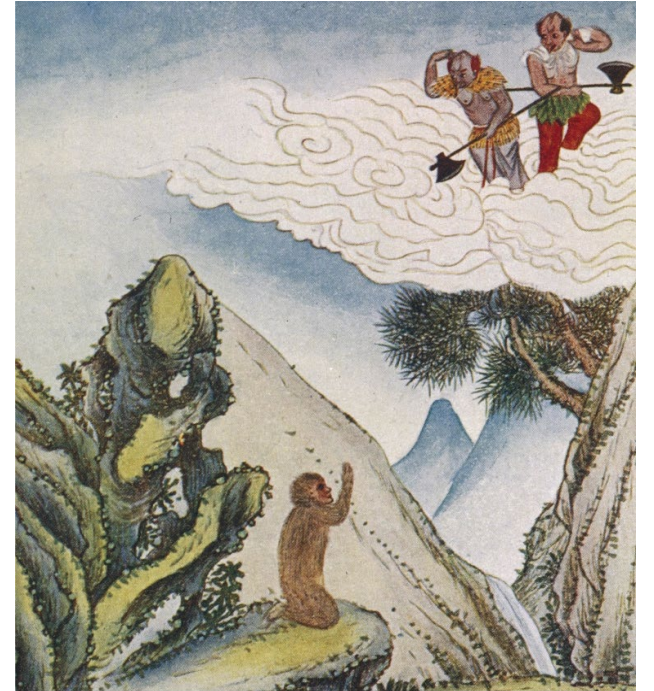
Abridged and translated by JOHN D. SMITH



PENGUIN CLASSICS

BAMBA SUSO
AND BANNA KANUTE

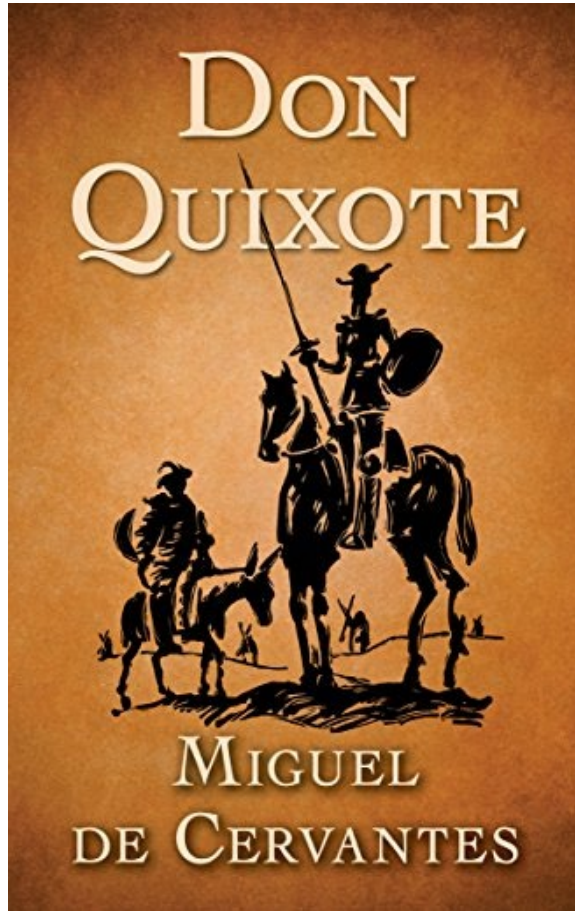
Sunjata



PENGUIN CLASSICS

WU CH'ÊNG-ÊN
Monkey

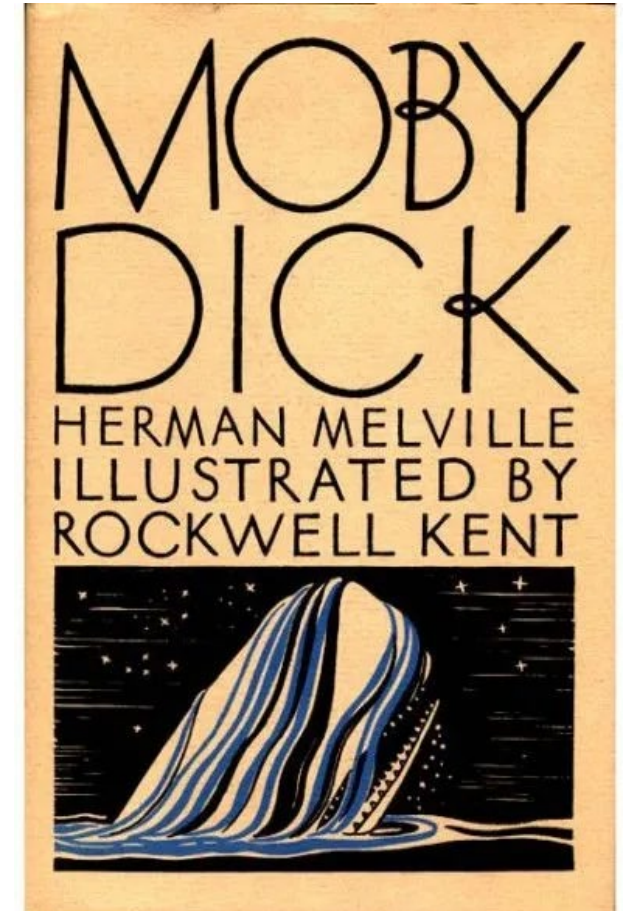
Adventure: A True Classic



Parody, Picaresque,
& Satire

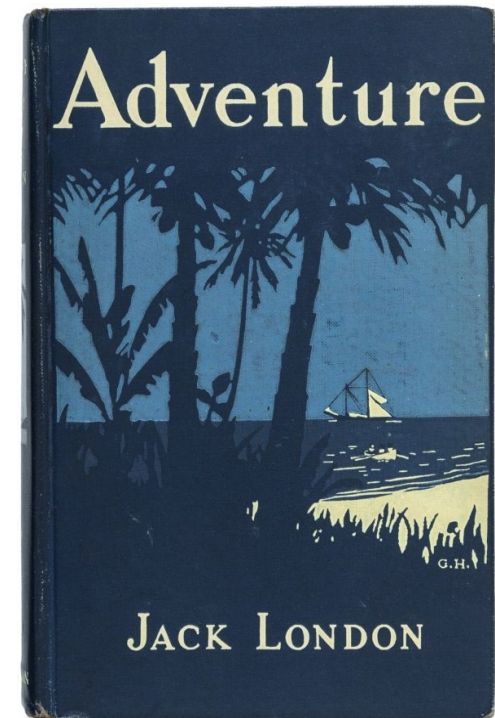
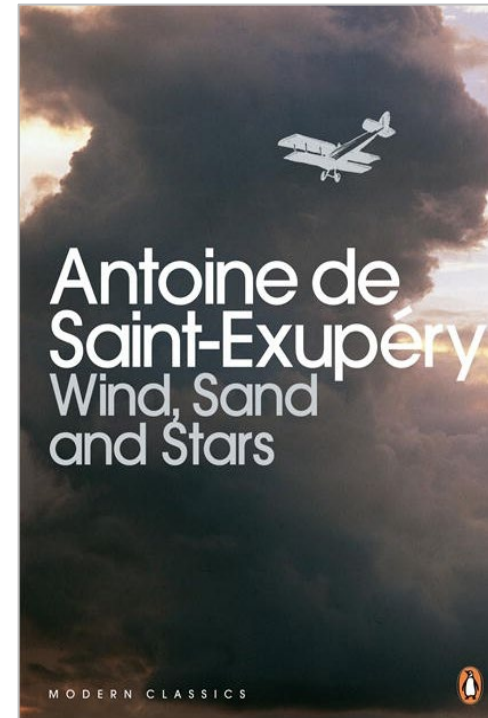
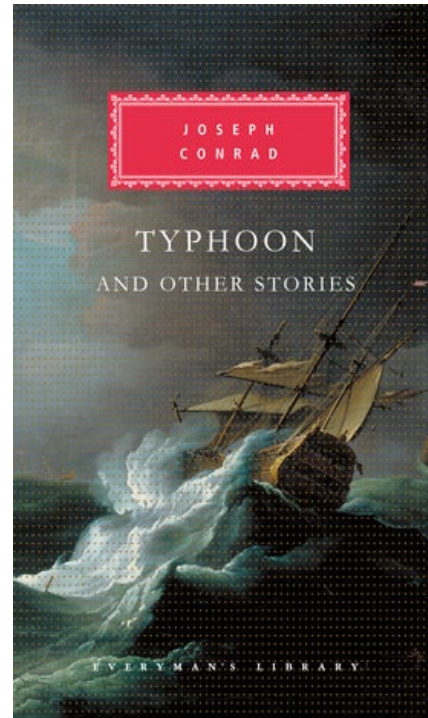
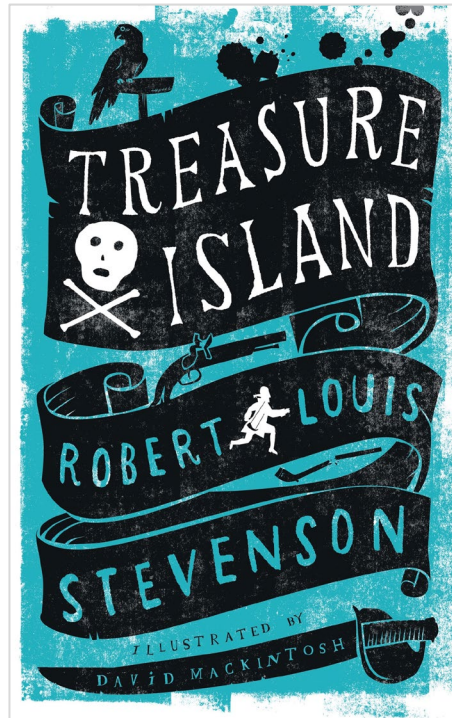
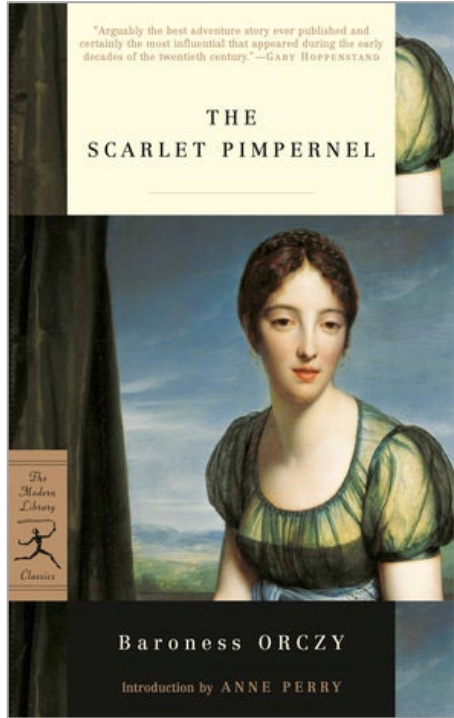


"True" Adventure

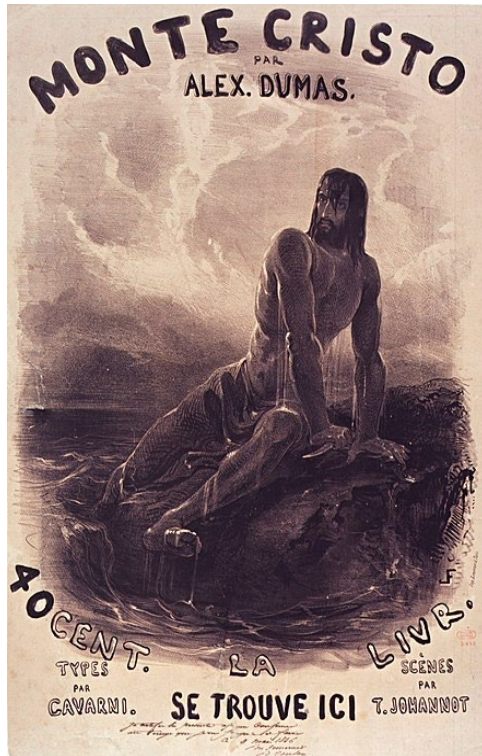


"Literary" Adventure

Adventure: A True Classic



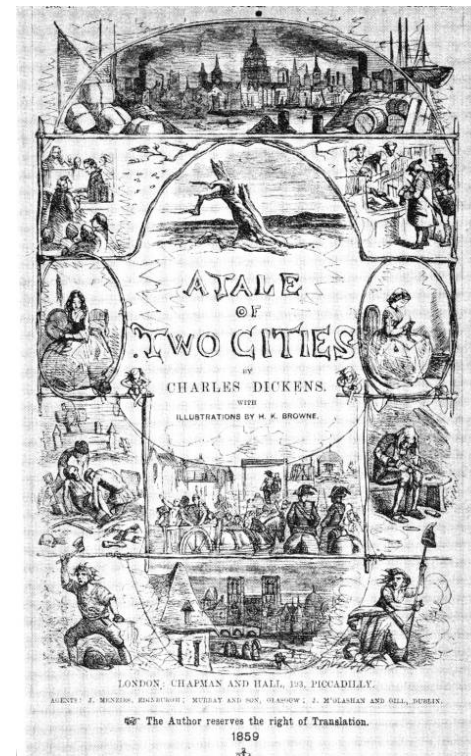
19th Century Literacy Boom: A Golden Age of Adventure



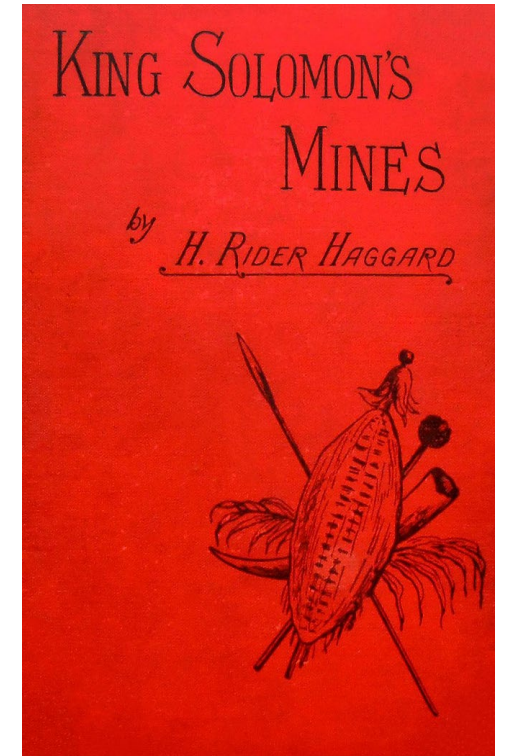
Serialization



Pulp fiction: Bloods,
Dreads, Dime
Novels



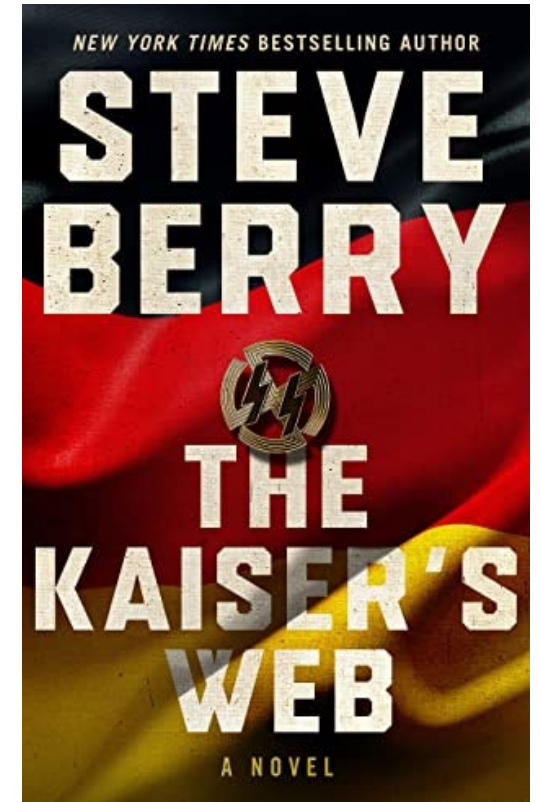
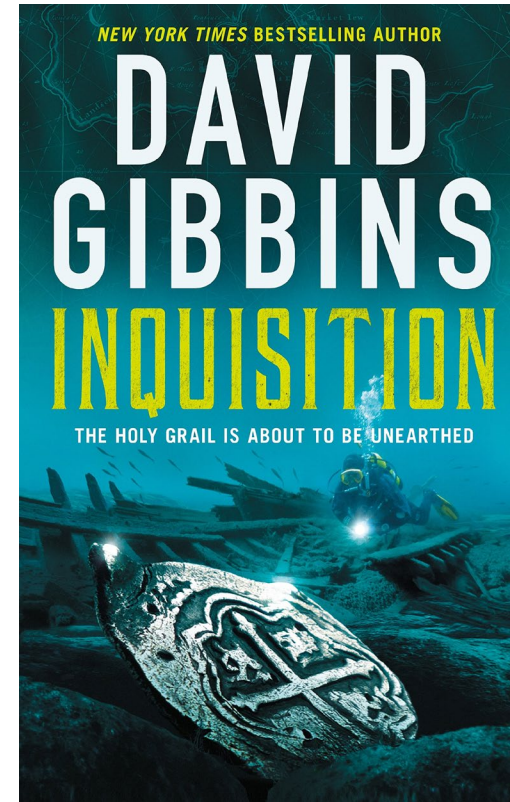
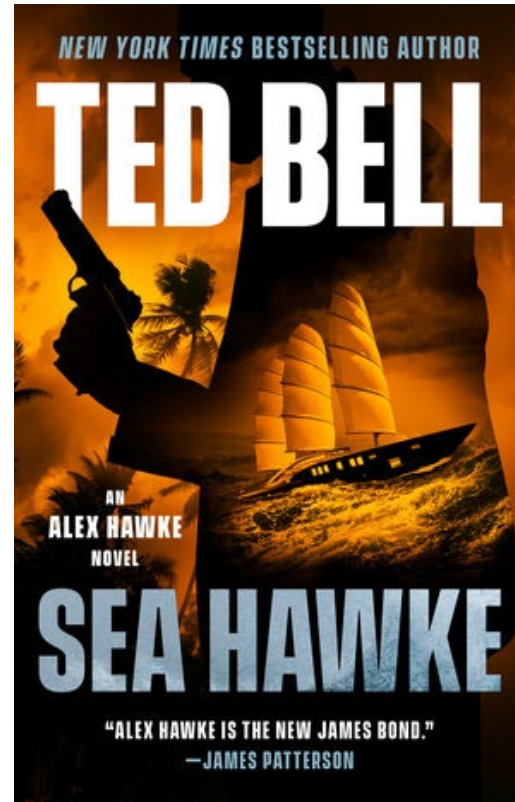
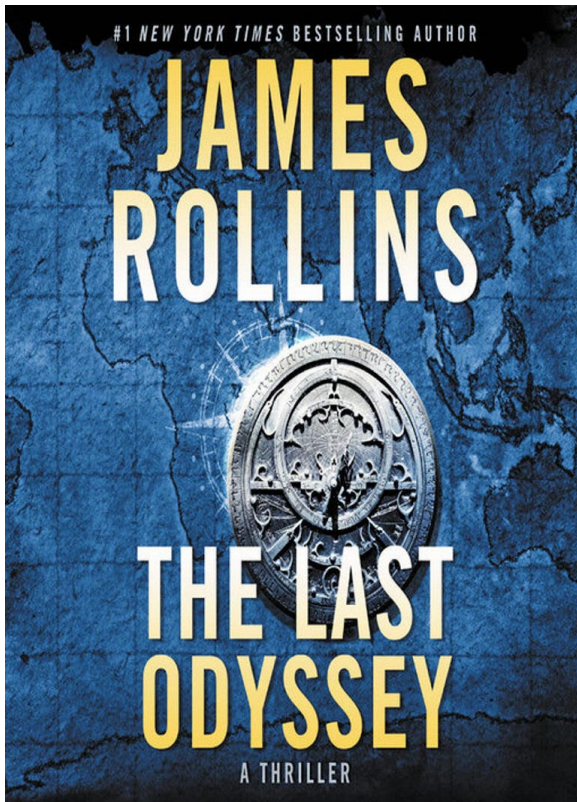
Historicals



Colonial
Exoticism

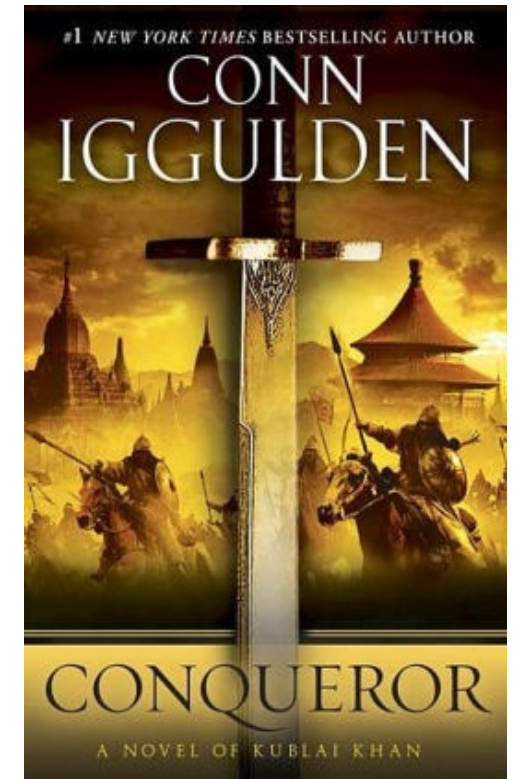
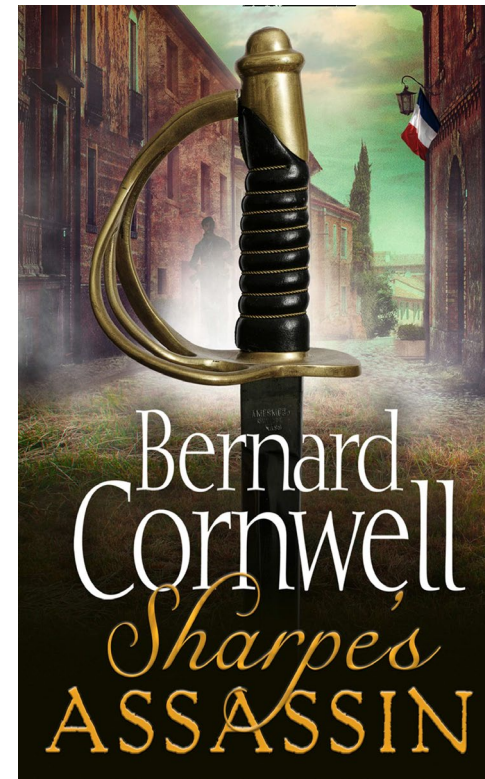
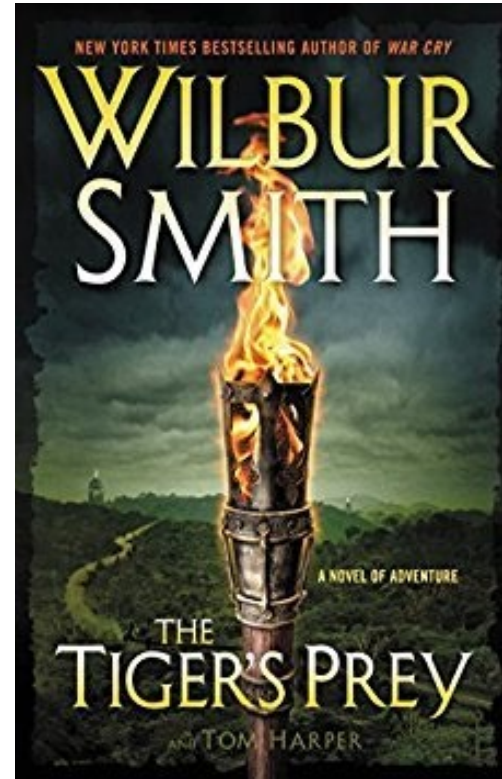
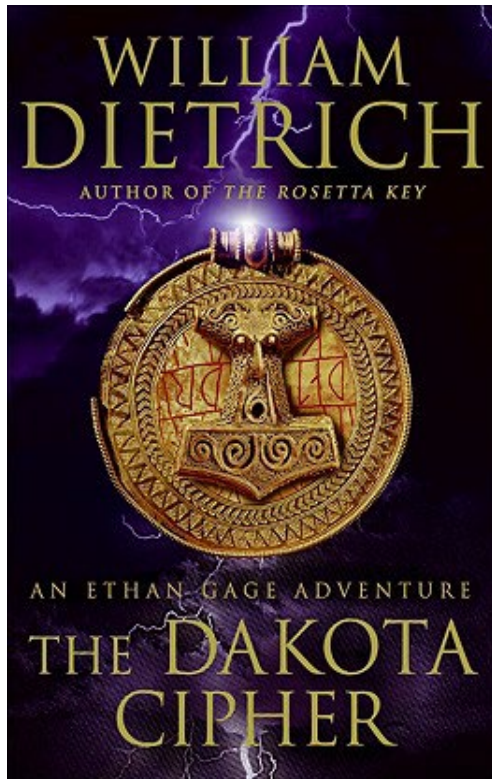
Contemporary Adventure Subgenres

Mainstream Adventure



Contemporary Adventure Subgenres

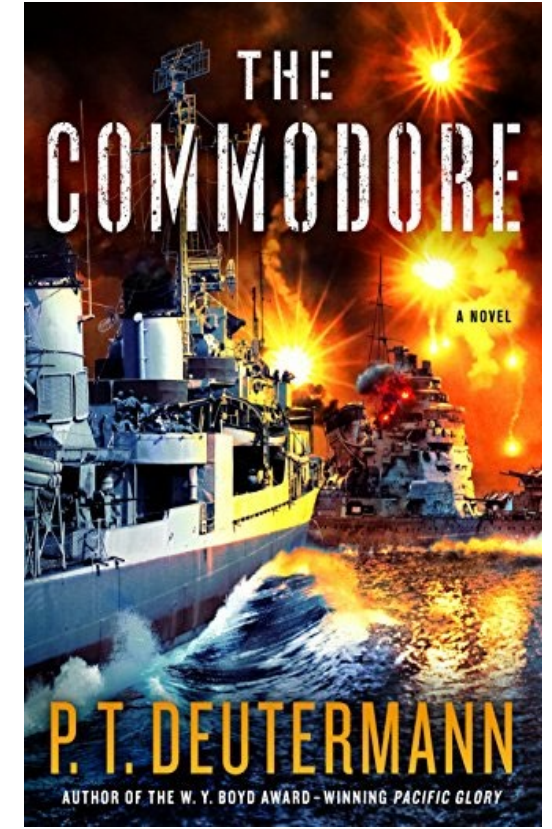
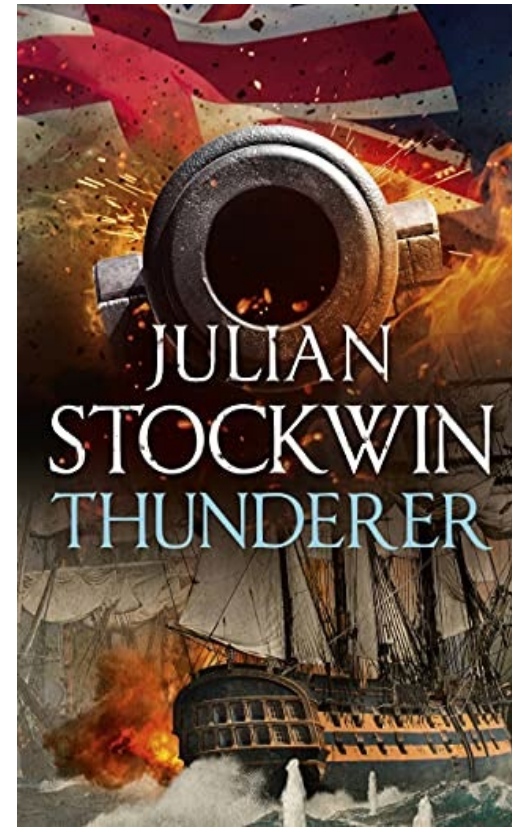
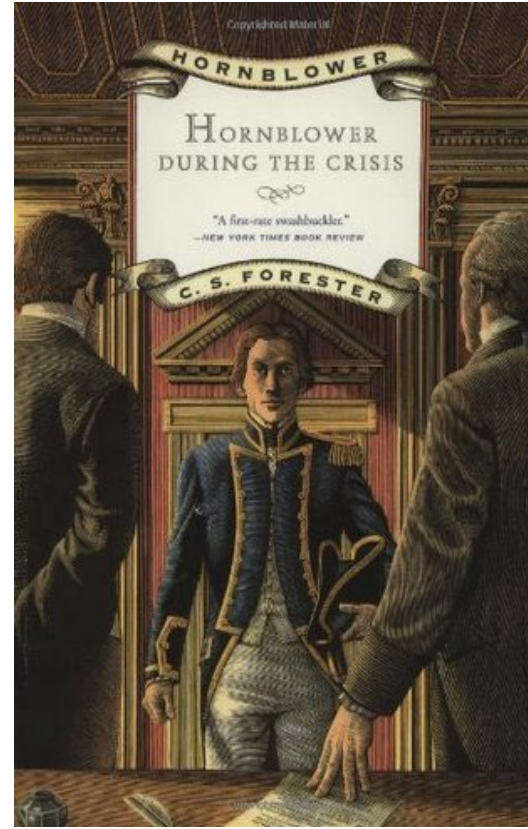
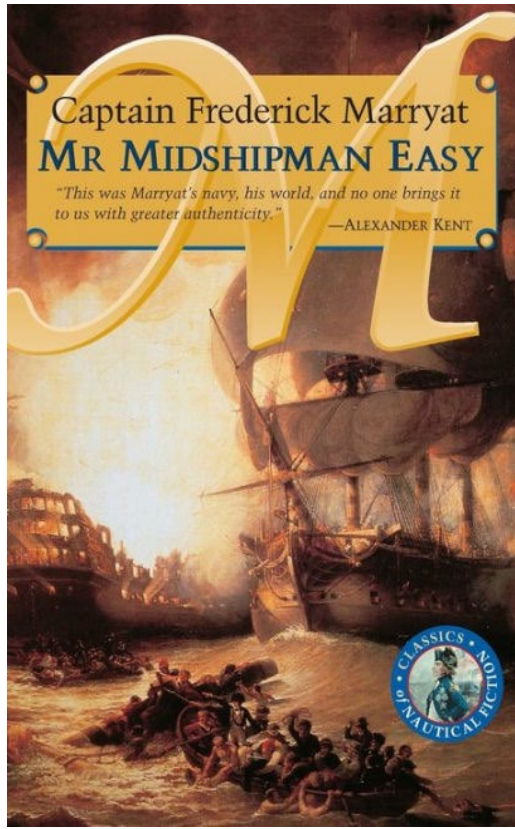
Historical Adventure



Fanciful adventure vs. Historical accuracy

Contemporary Adventure Subgenres

Nautical Adventure



Westerns



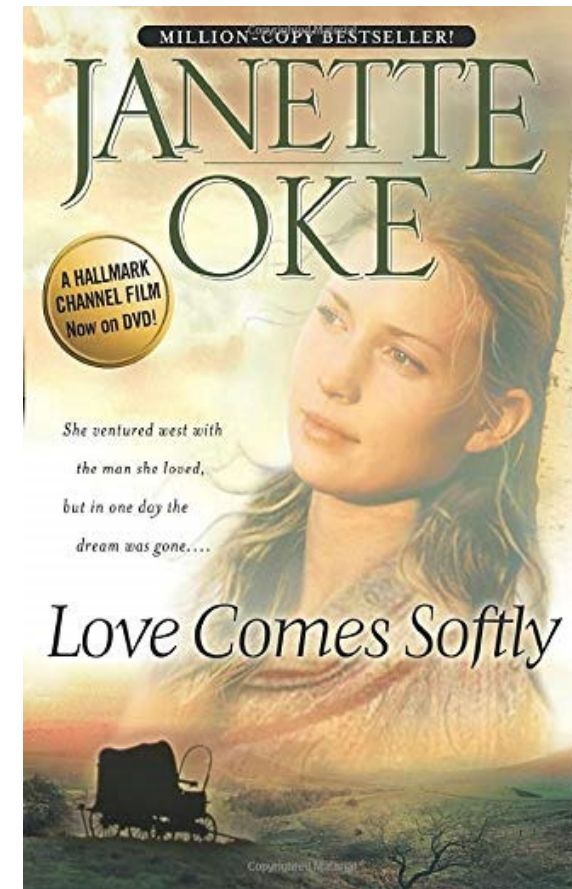
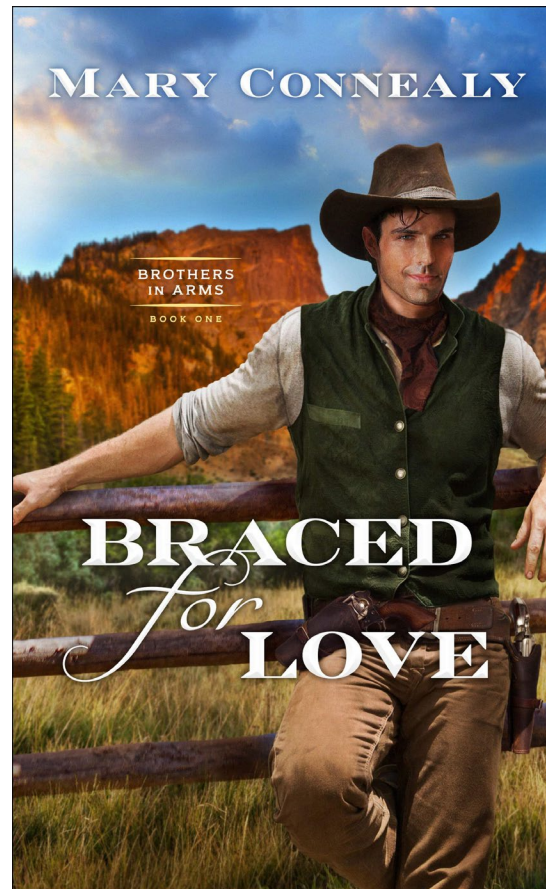
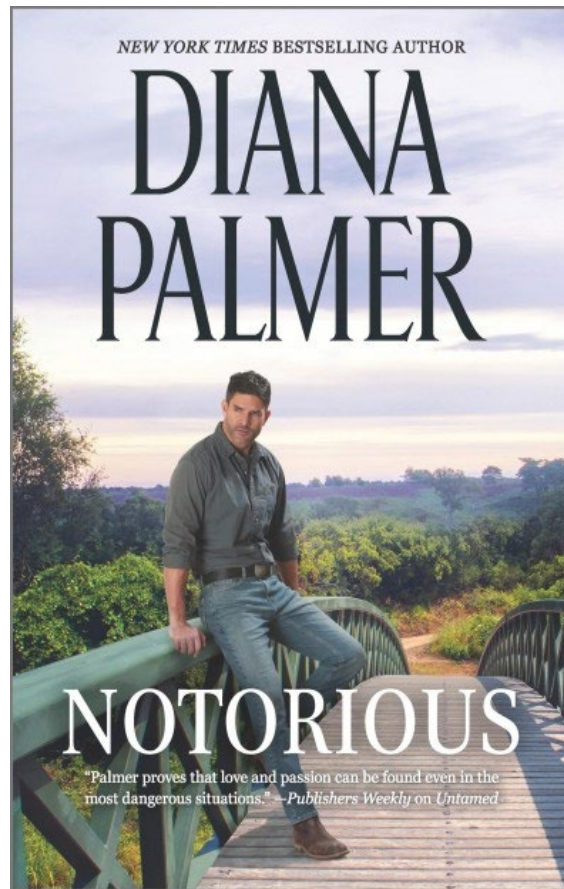
What are Westerns?

Characteristics:

- Specific sense of place—generally the Mississippi River to the Pacific Coast
- Specific sense of time—generally the 1850s to the early 20th Century
- Traditionally the “mythic feel of the Old West takes precedence over accuracy”
- Often the loner who rides into town...



What we're not talking about today...



History of the Genre



Library of Congress.

History of the Western Genre

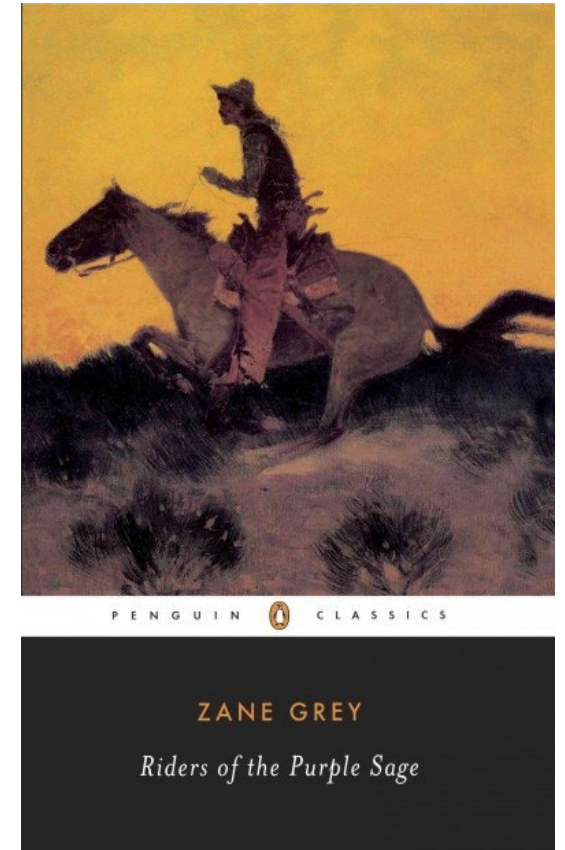
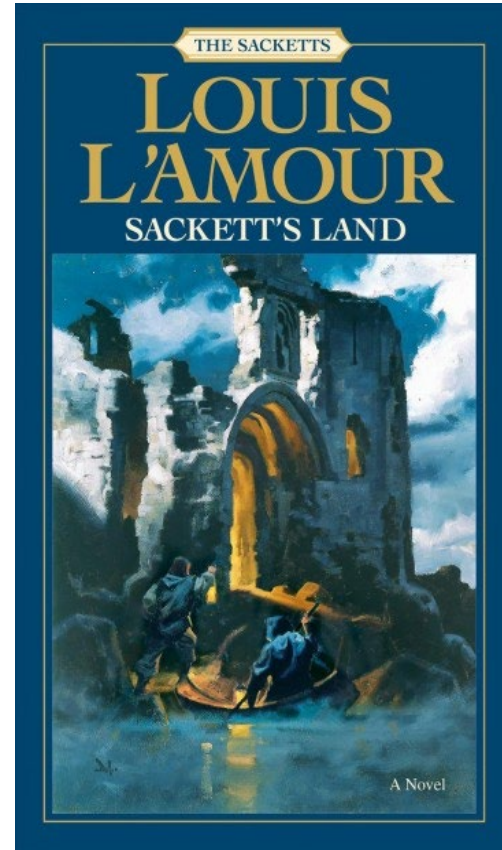
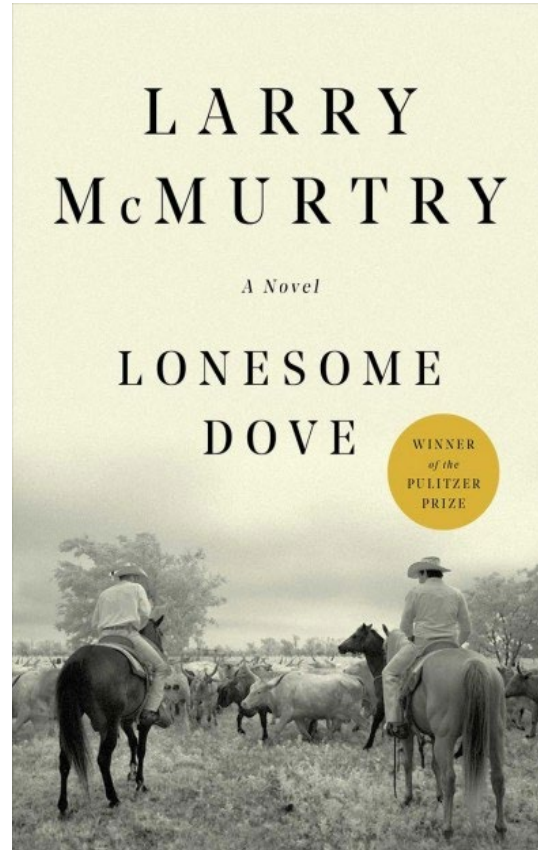
- Dime novels and penny dreadfuls
- Pulp magazines
- Peak in the 1960s along with the wave of TV shows and movies
- “Adult Westerns”
- Continuing to expand and morph



The Pulp Magazines Project:
<https://www.pulpmags.org/index.htm>



Classic Examples



Why read Westerns?

- Nostalgia for a lost time
- Connection to the land
- Action-packed adventures
- Bad guys get theirs

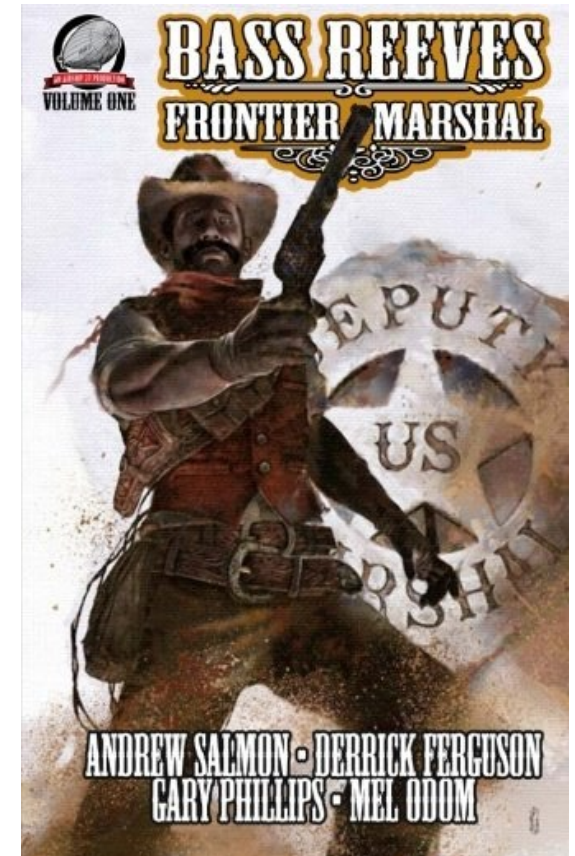
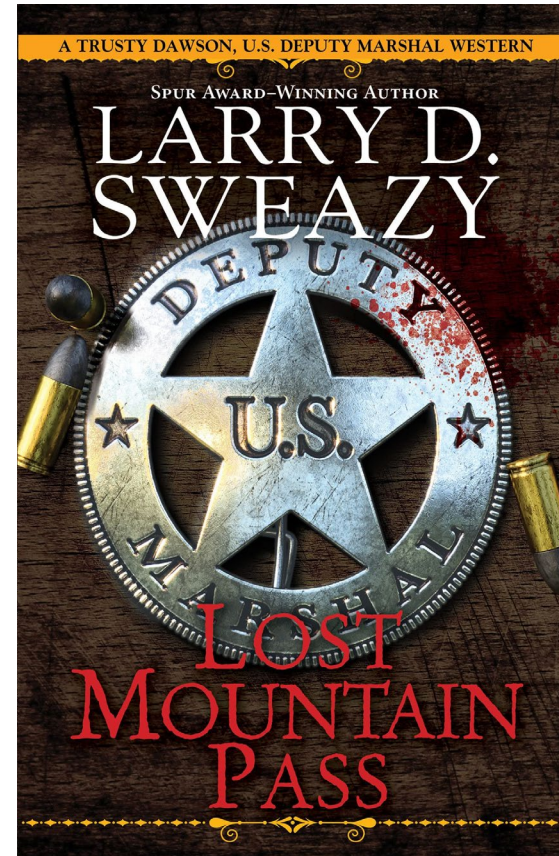
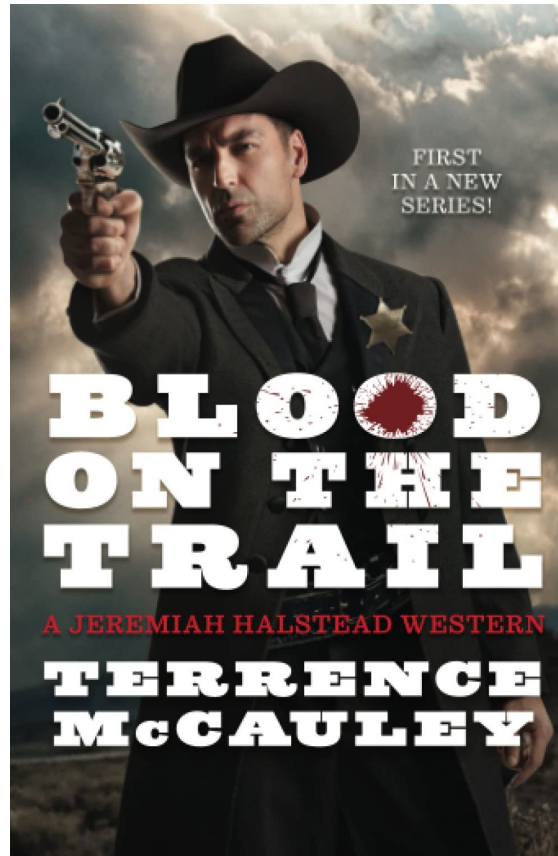
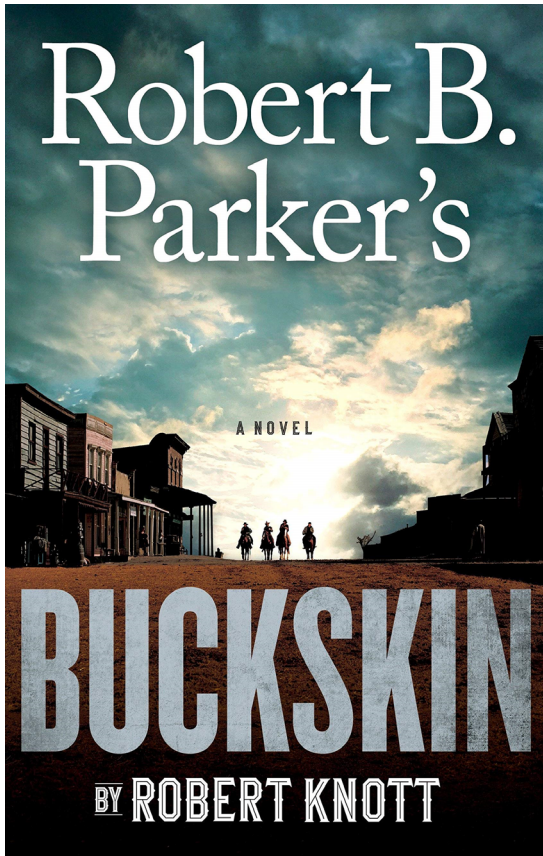


Western Themes



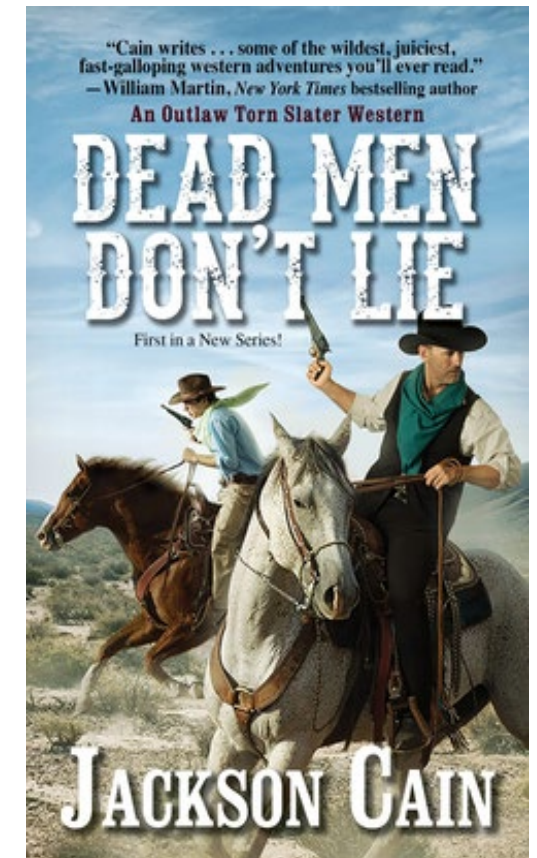
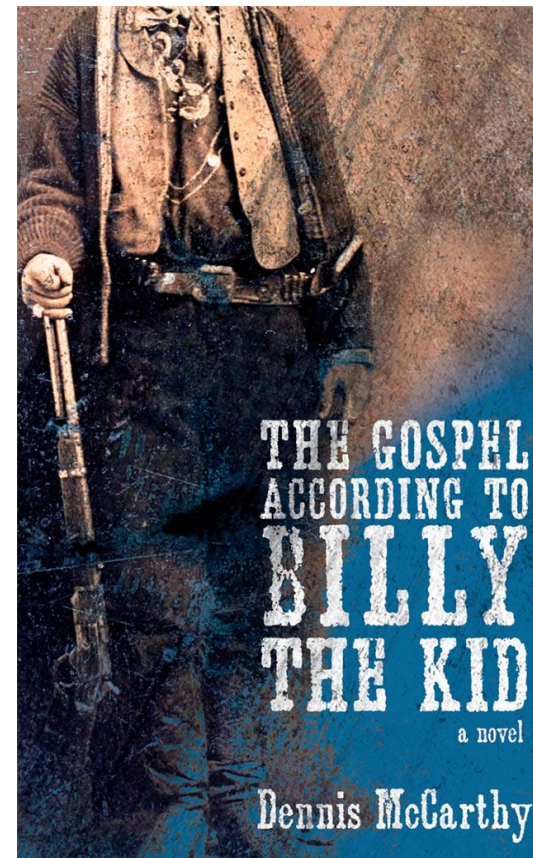
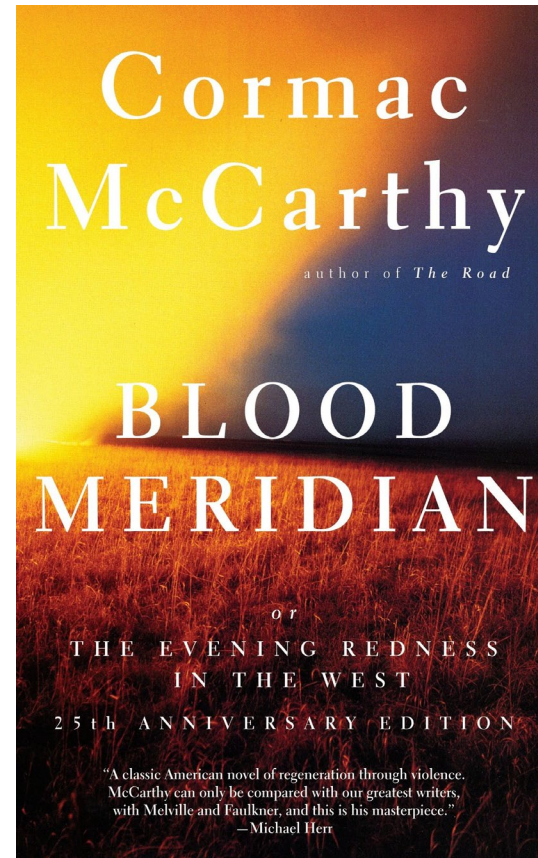
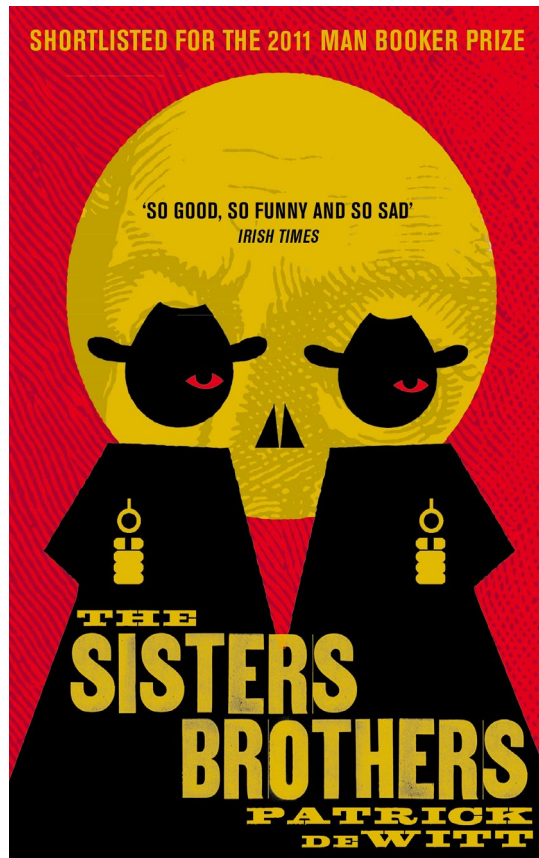
Lawmen

Sheriffs, Marshalls, Pinkerton Agents, etc.



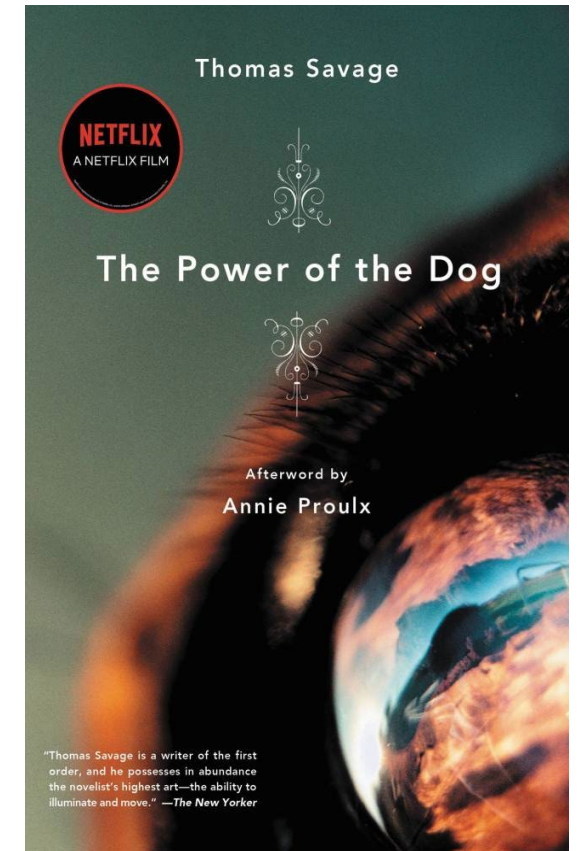
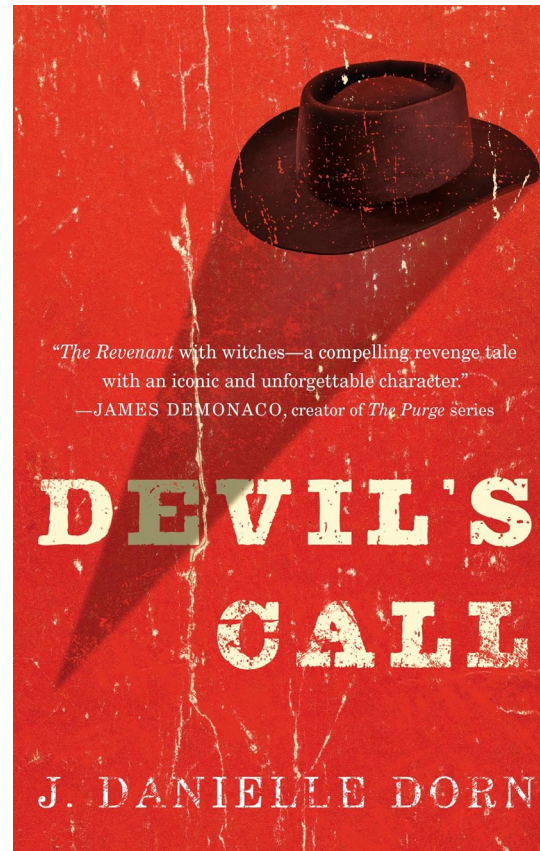
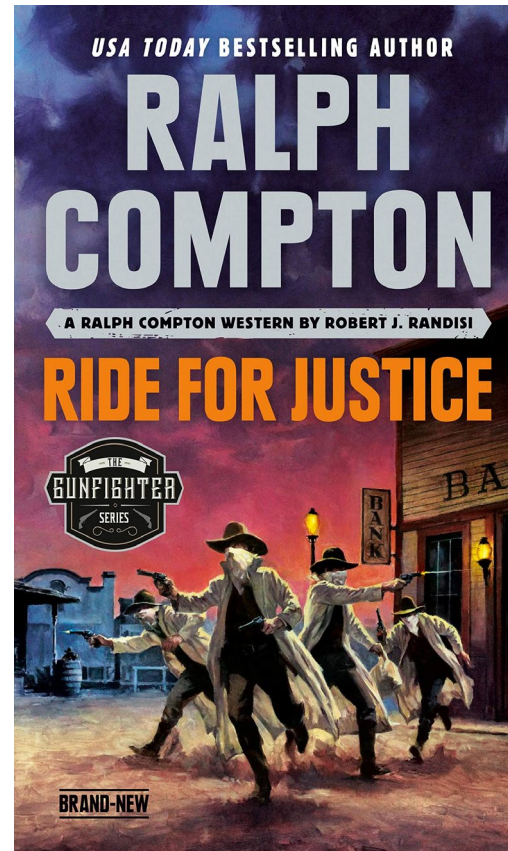
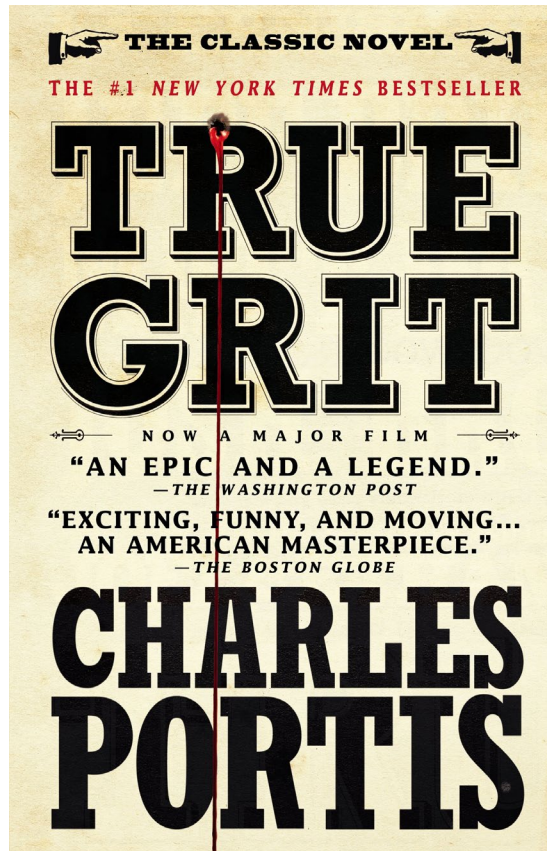
Outlaws

On the run (whether merited or not), robbers, killers, leading the show.



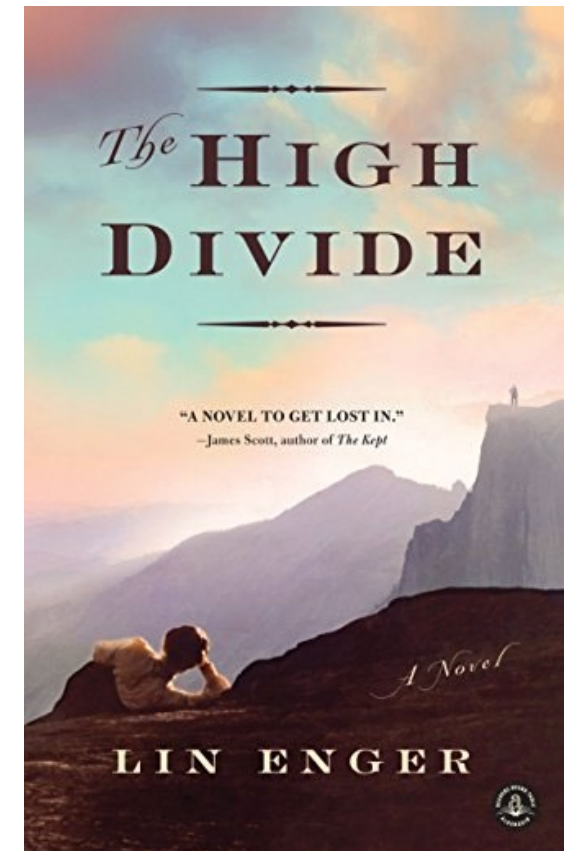
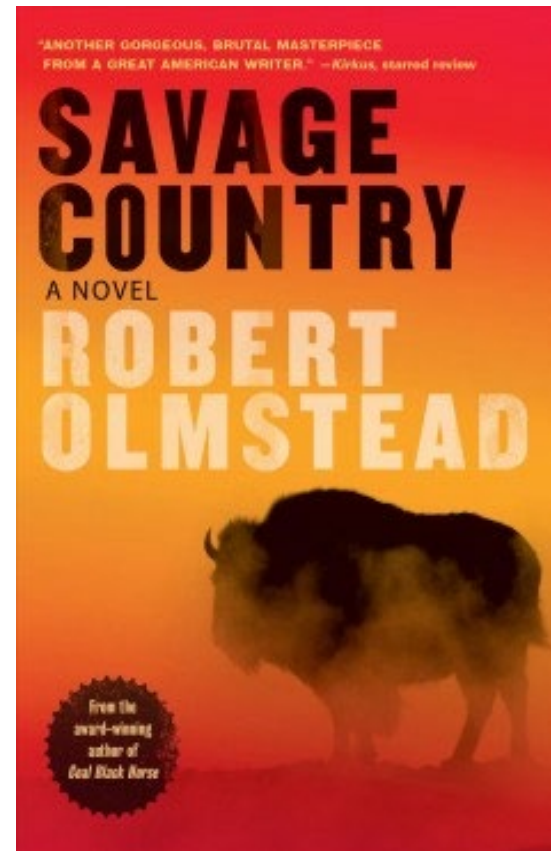
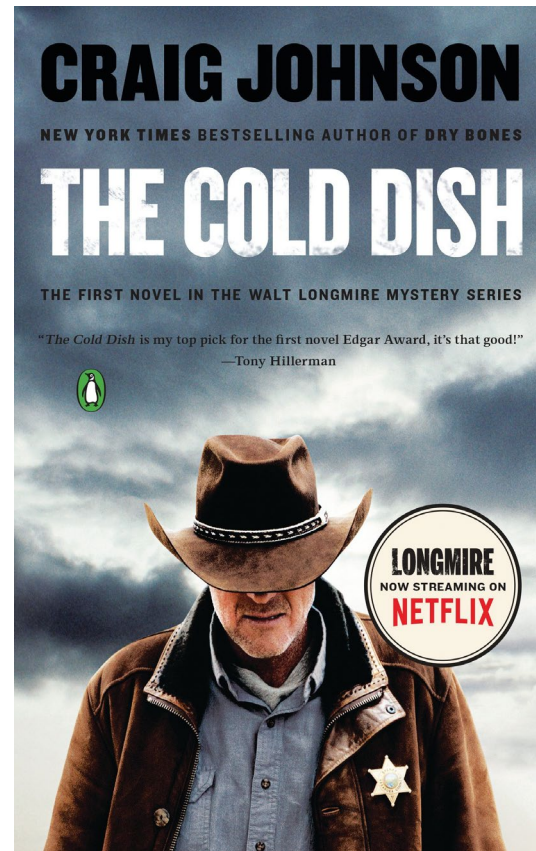
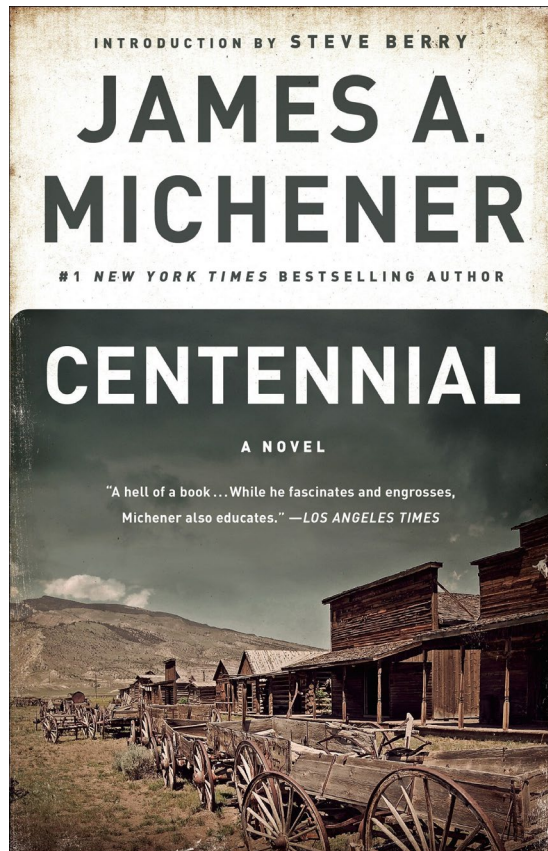
Revenge

The wronged have their day and vengeance is theirs.



The Land As Character

The wide-open spaces of the west and the fight to survive them....



Questions to ask readers!

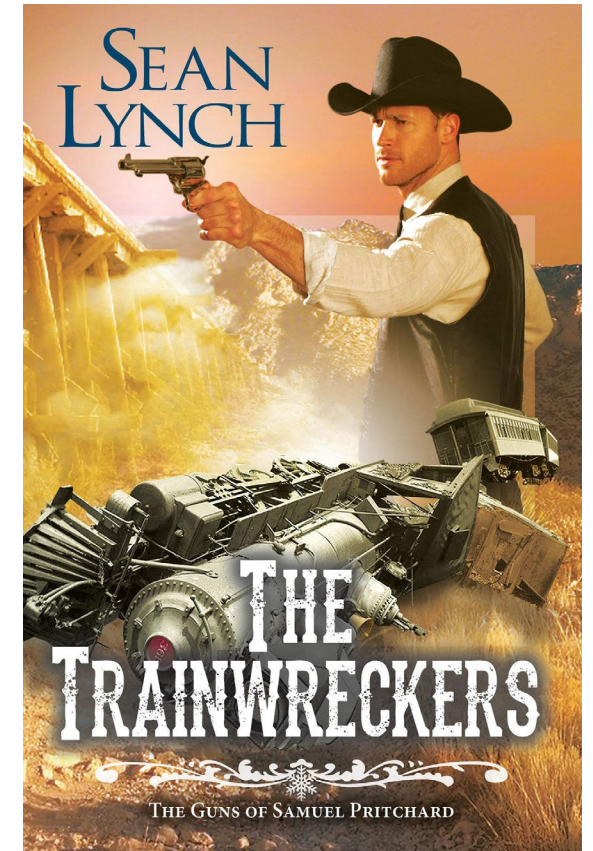
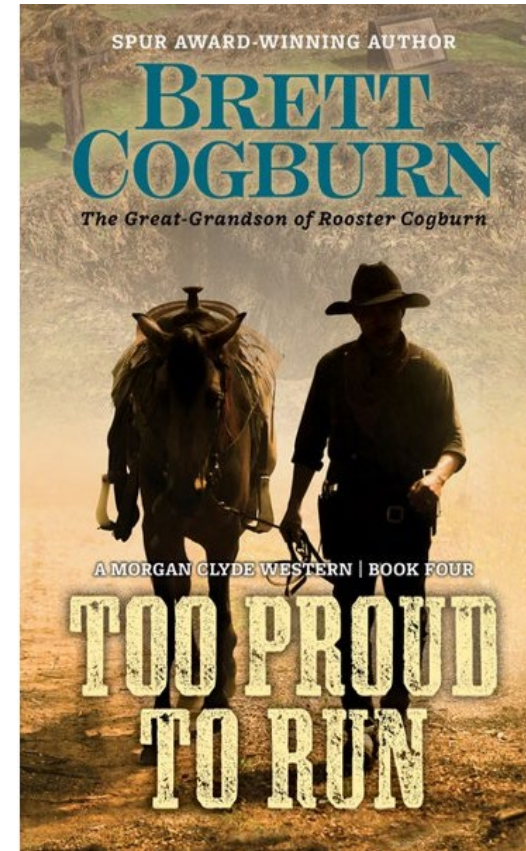
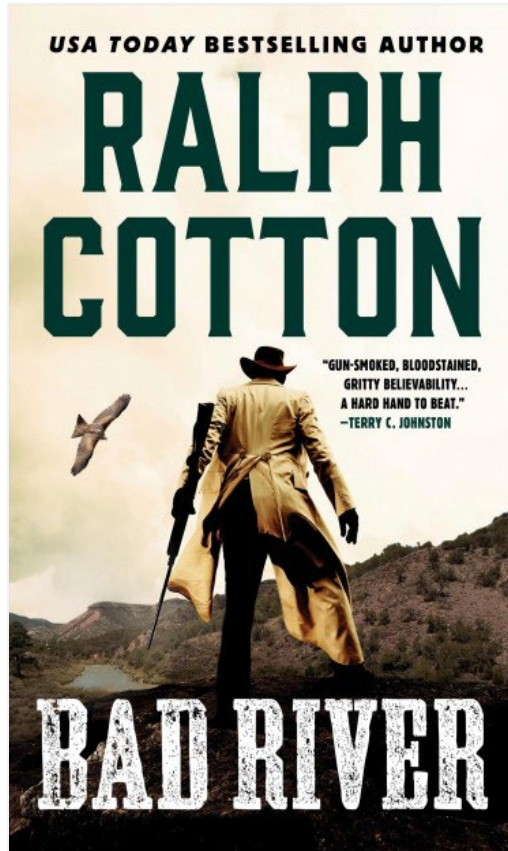
What level of action?

How open to other genre elements are you?

What level of romance is acceptable, if any?

What do you want to avoid?

Current Ongoing Series



Popular publishers include Pinnacle at Kensington, Kensington, Five Star, Forge, TwoDot, St. Martin's Paperbacks

Western Awards



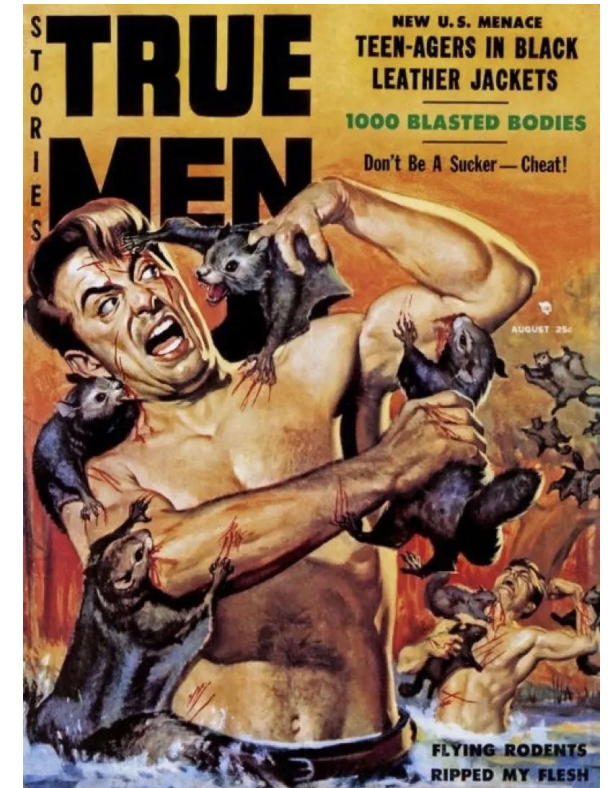
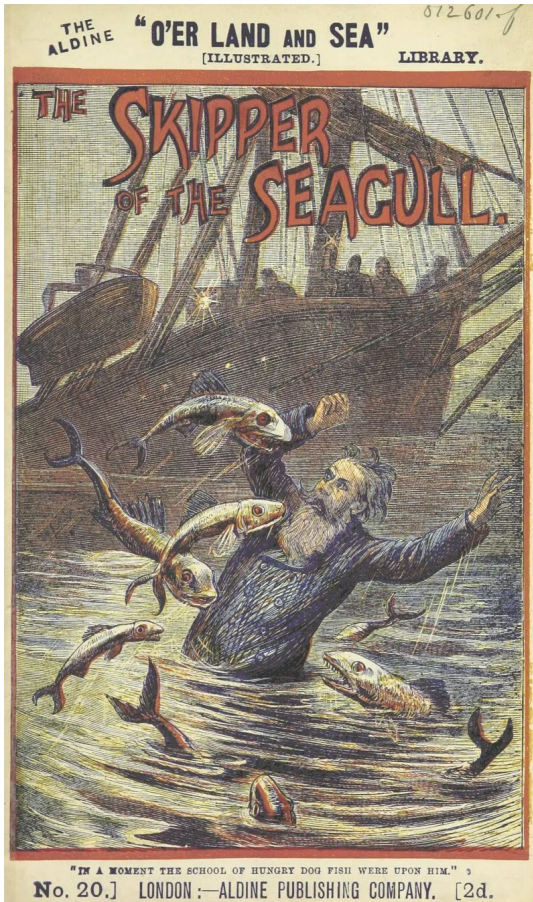
Reading the West Awards



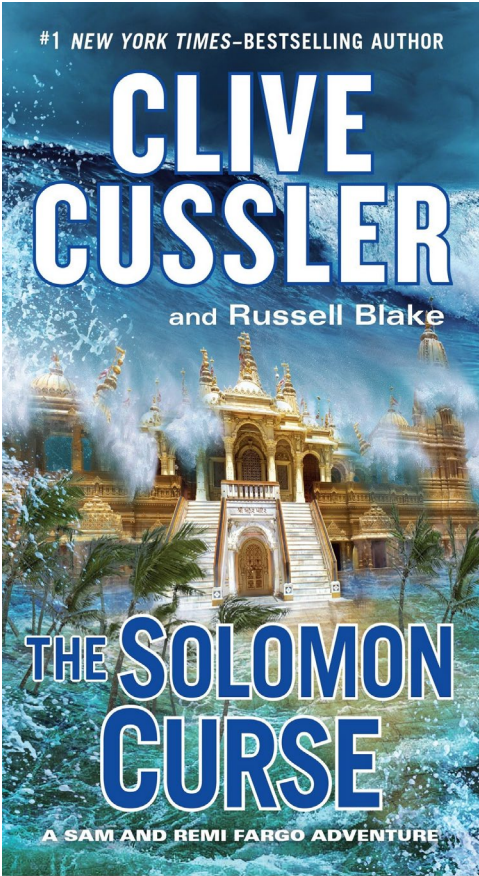
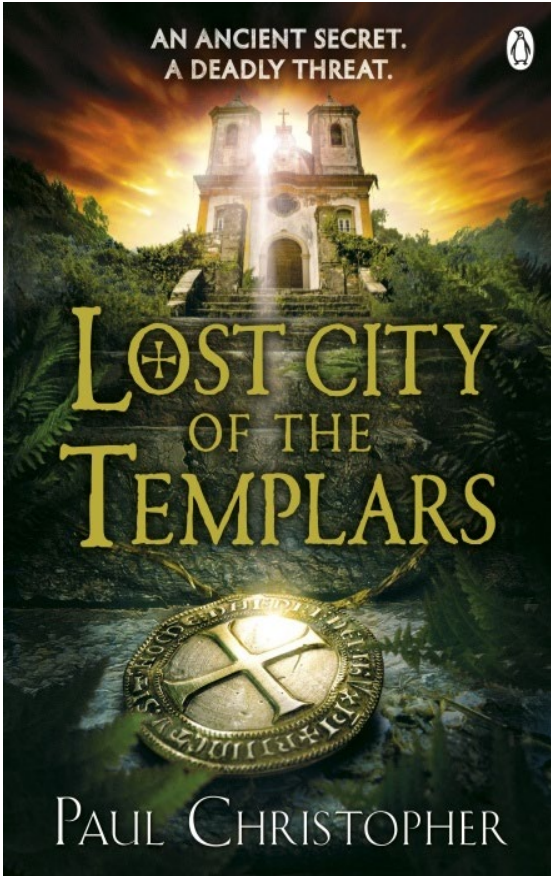
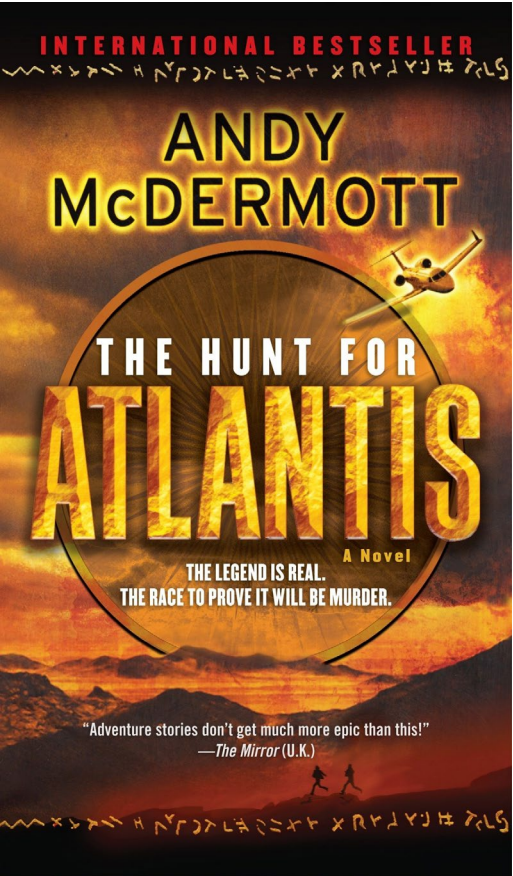
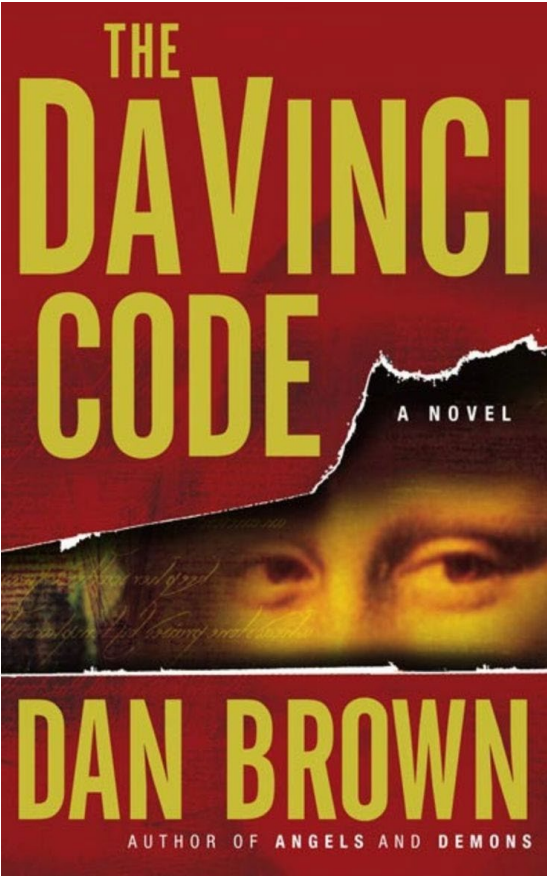
Spur Awards from the Western Writers of America

*20 potential categories
for awards*

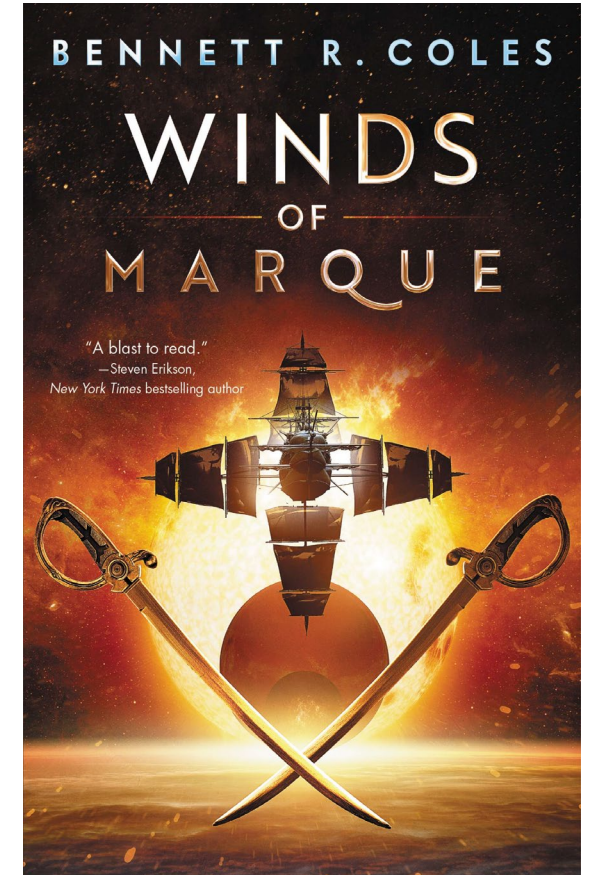
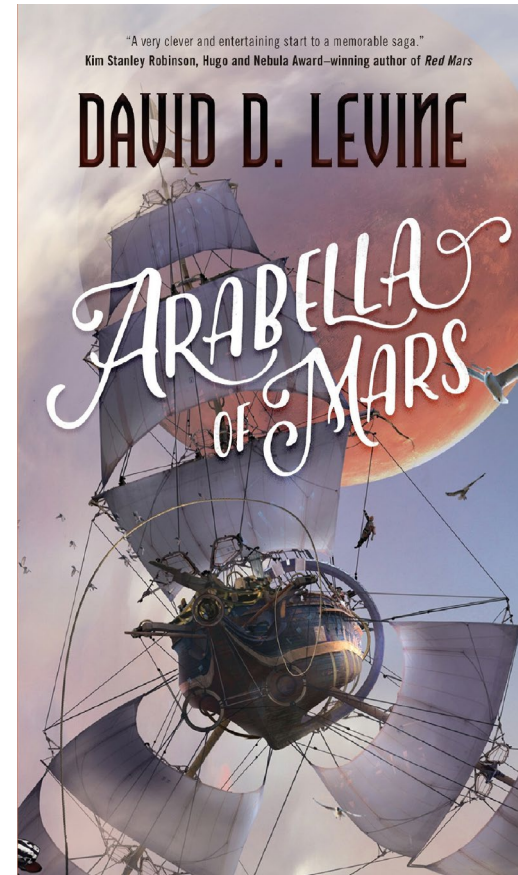
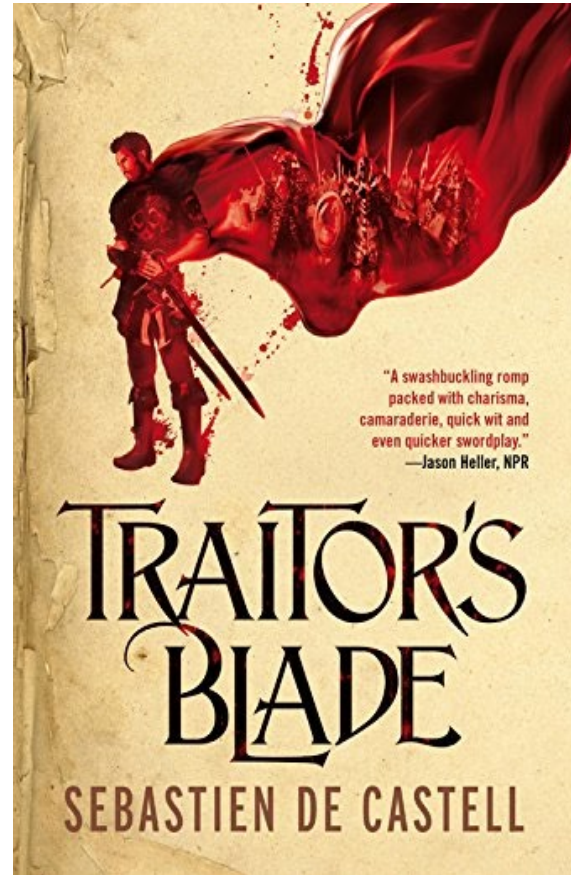
Adventure Themes

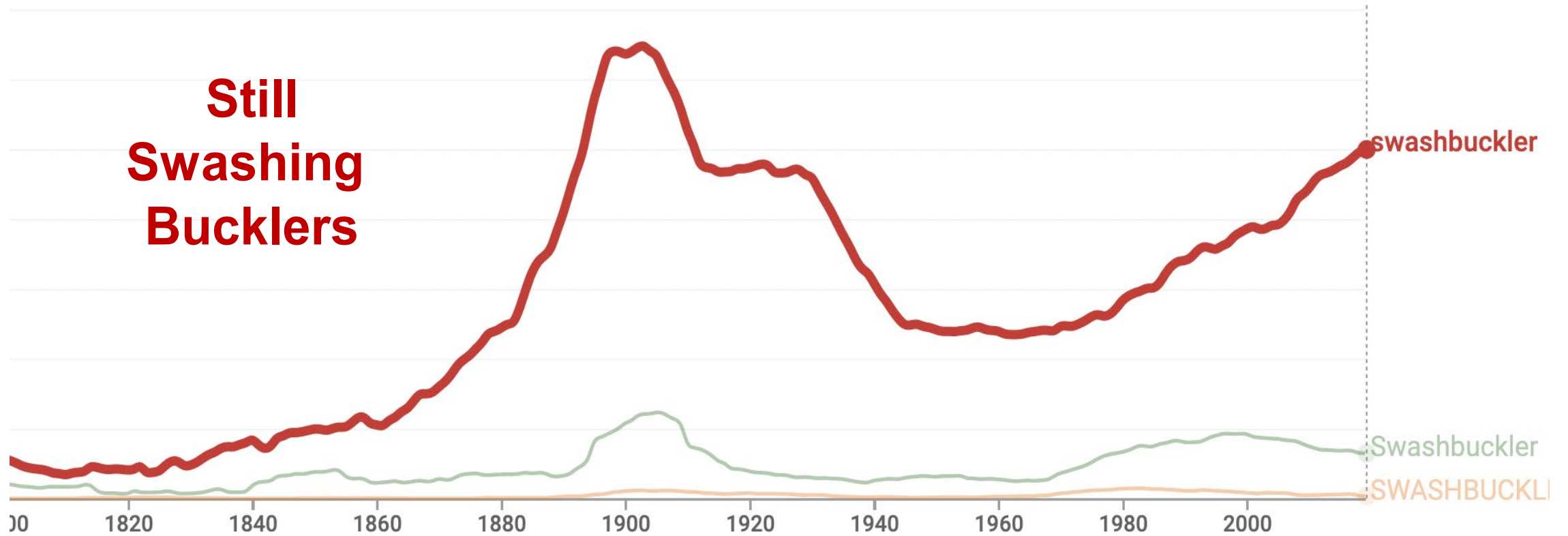


Ancient Enigmas



Swashbuckling!





"Indiana Jones"

"Yarn"

"Derring-Do"

"Romp"

"Rollicking"

"Adventur*"

"James Bond"

"Over-the-Top"

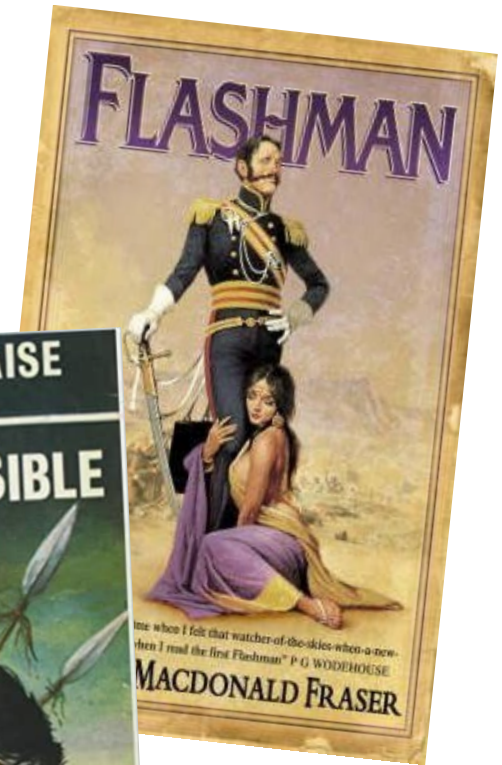
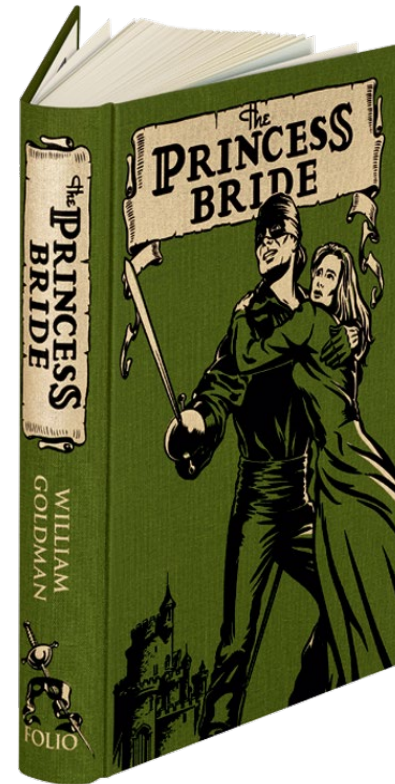
"Rip-Roaring"

"FUN!"

"Tongue in Cheek"



ADVENTURE IS *FUN!*



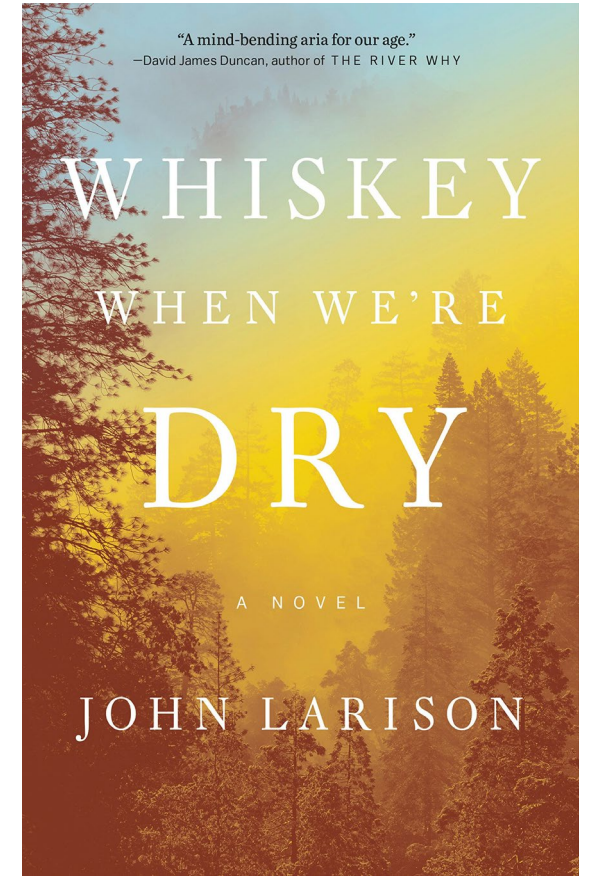
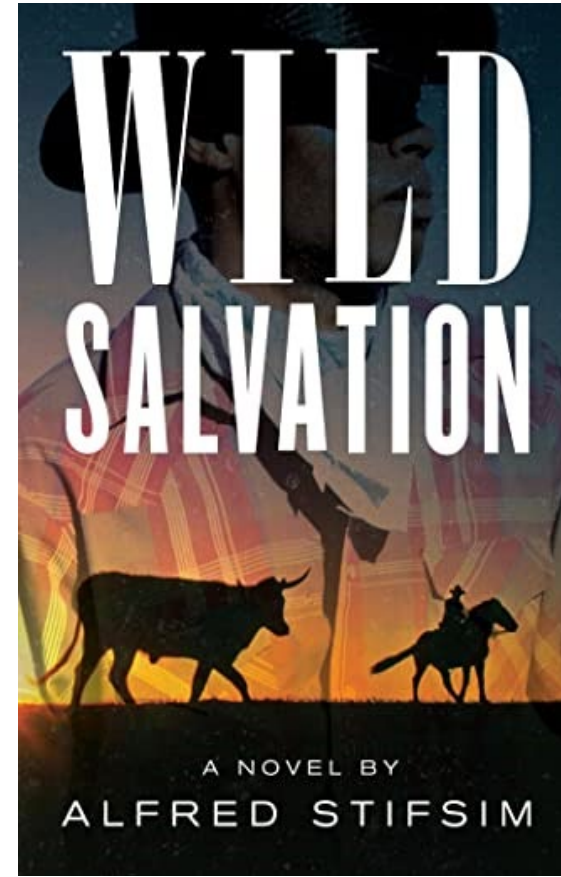
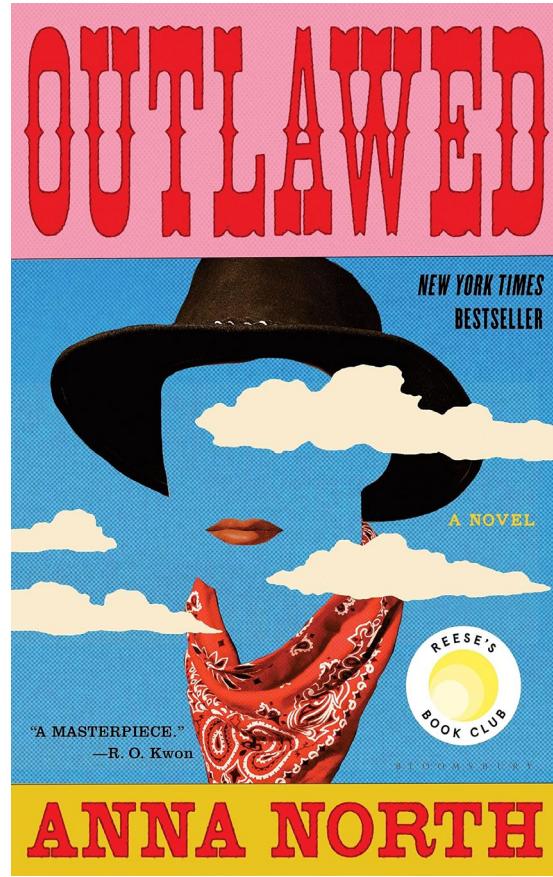
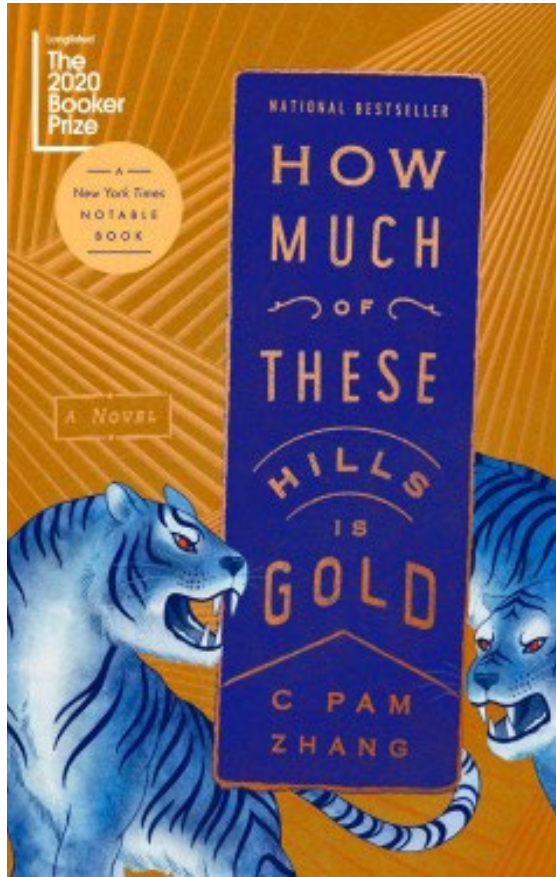
A genre that refuses to take itself too seriously.

trends

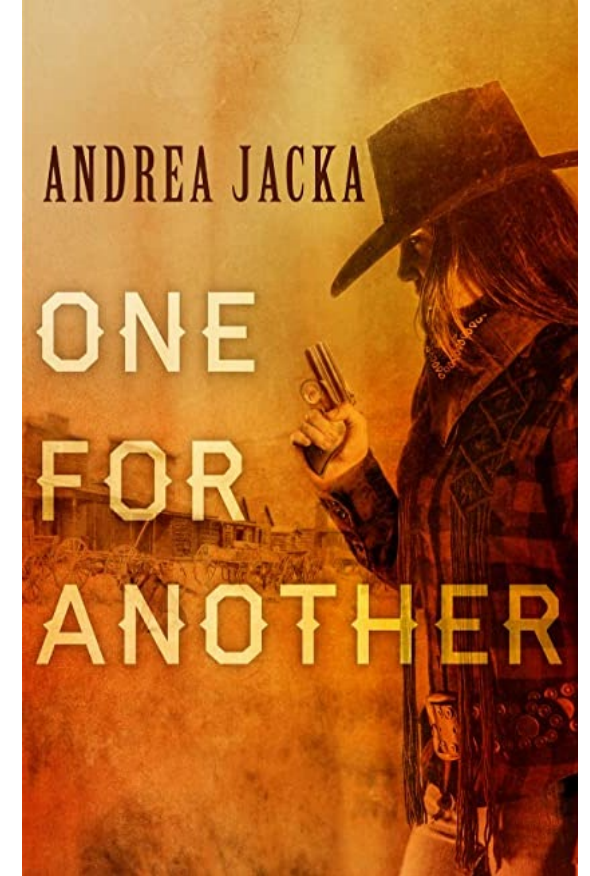
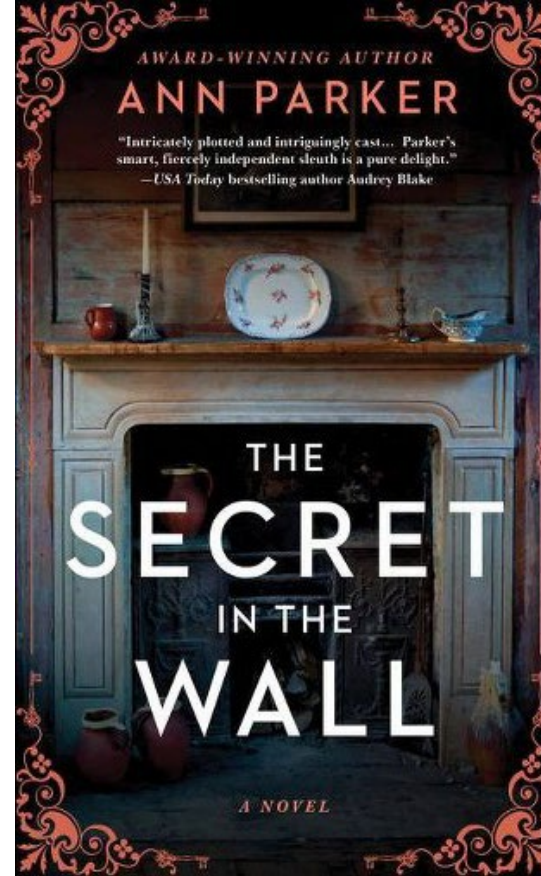
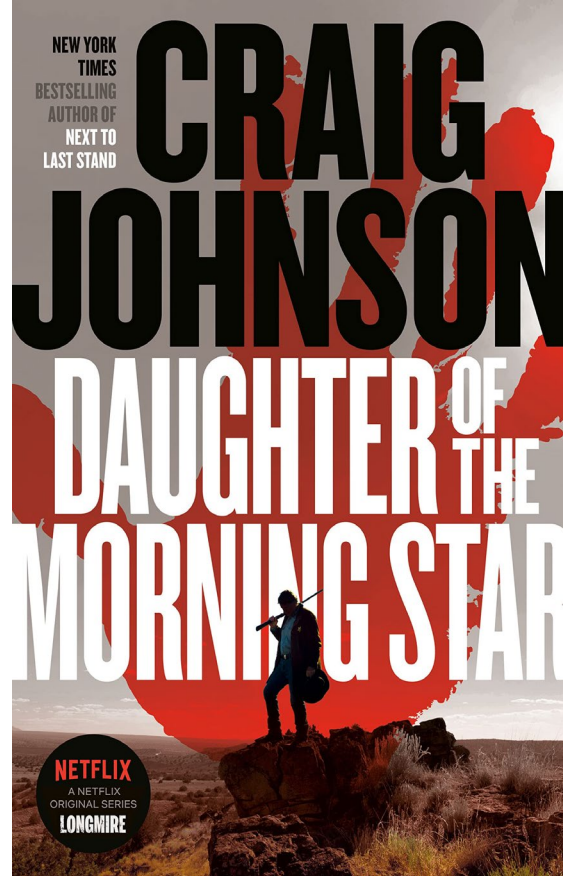
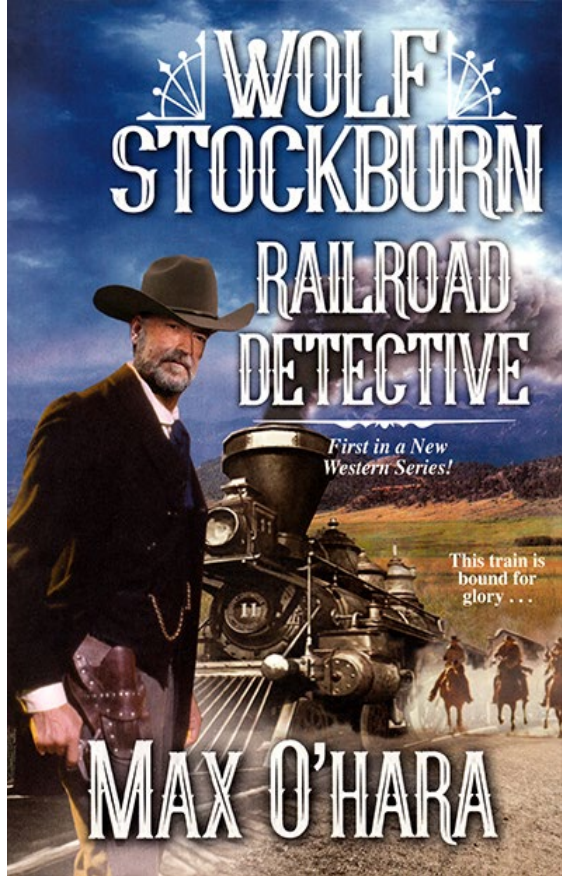


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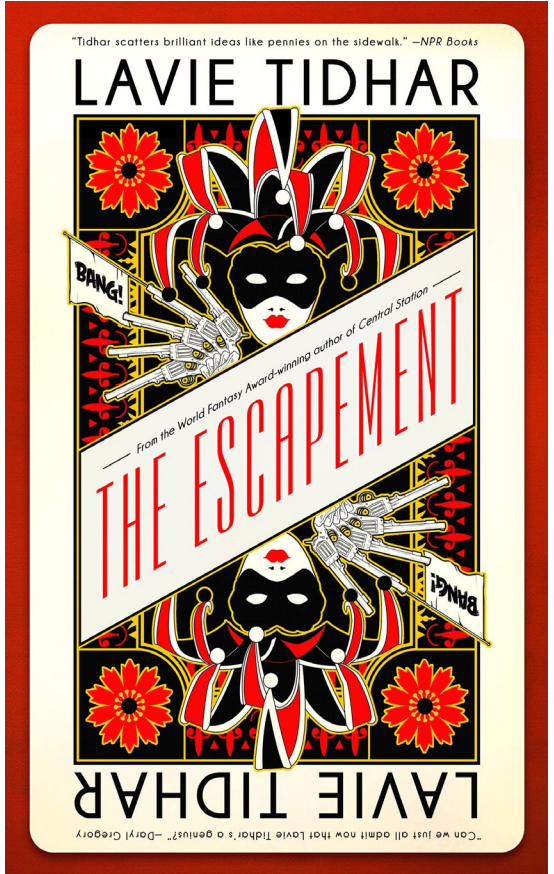
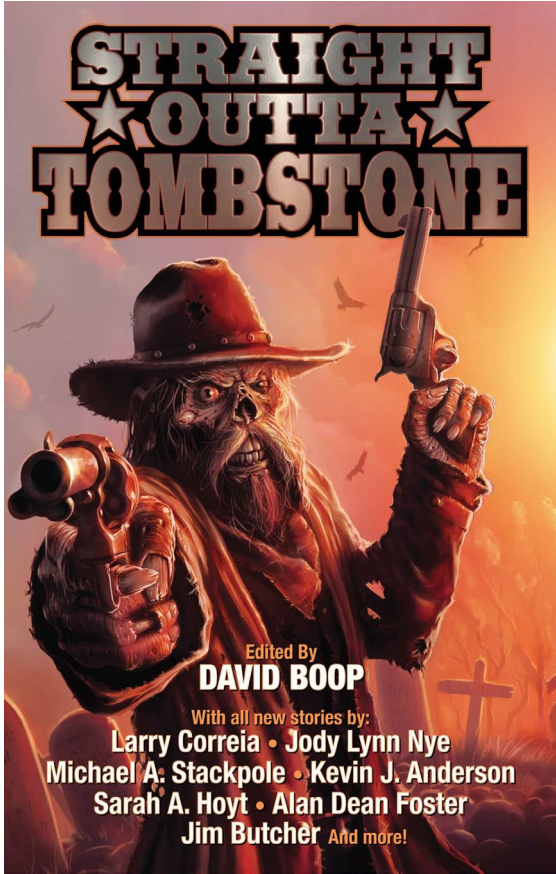
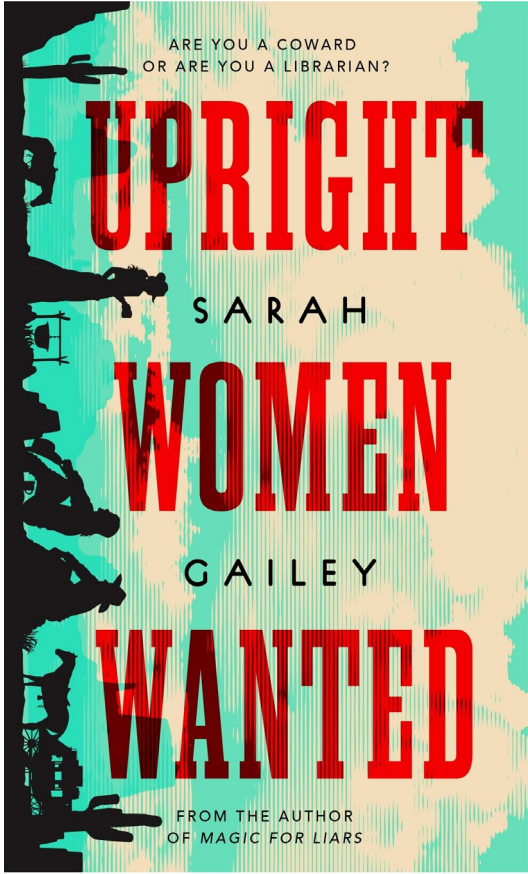
More Points of View



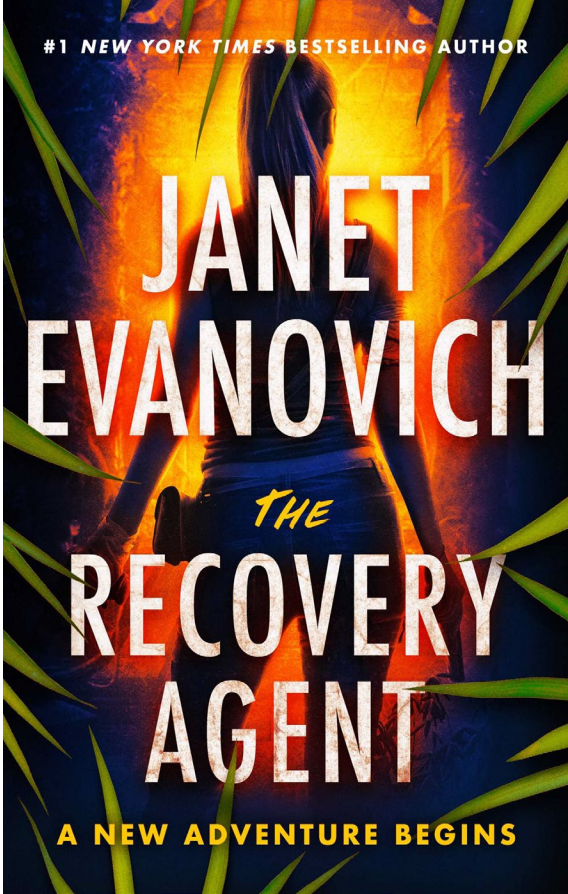
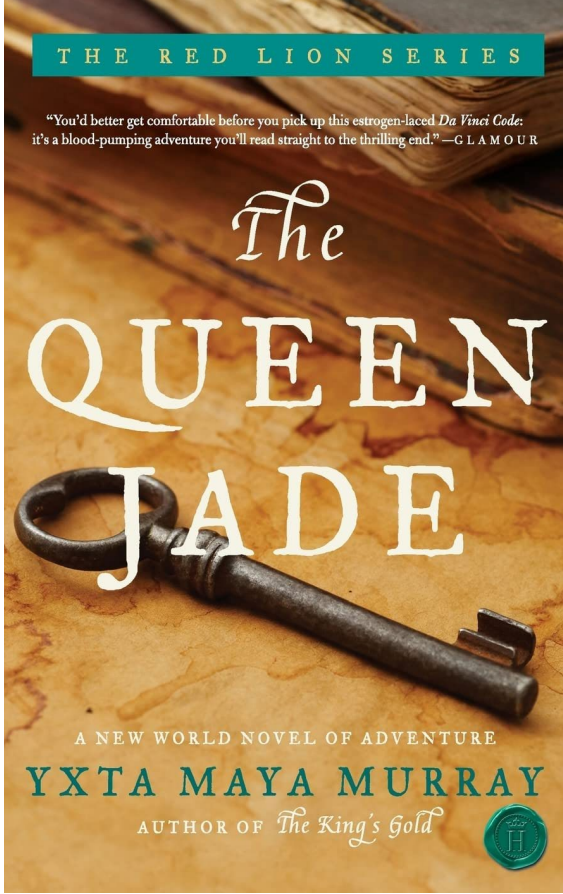
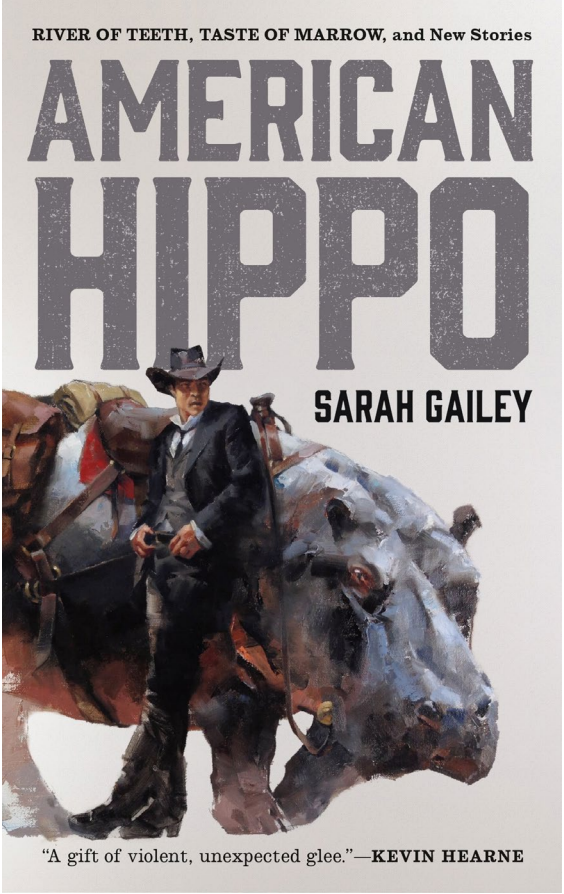
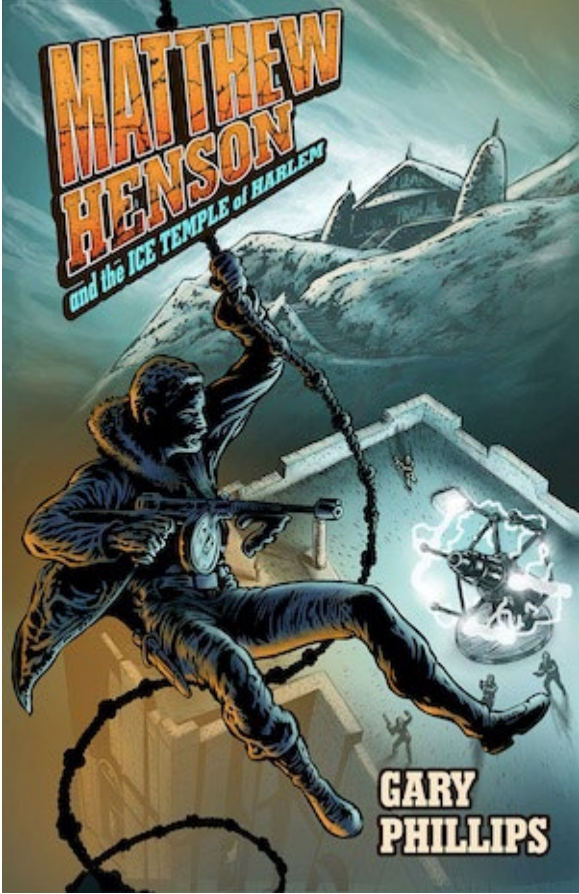
Western Mysteries



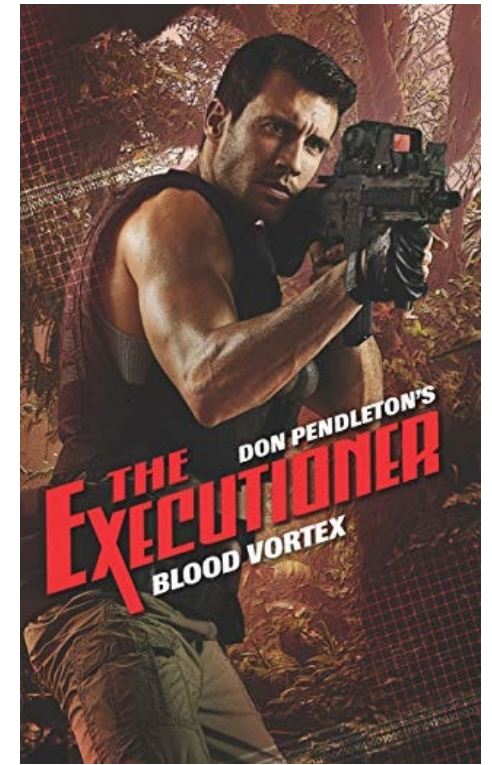
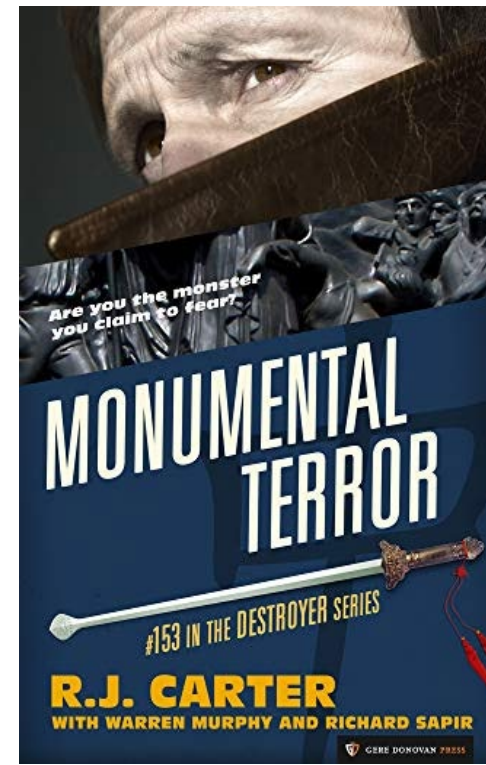
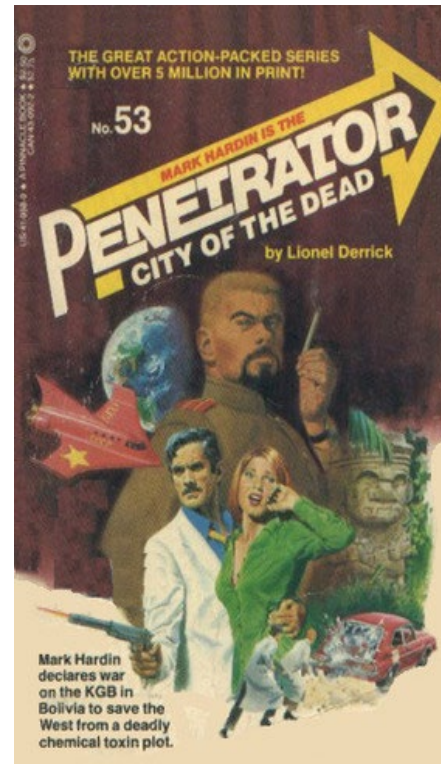
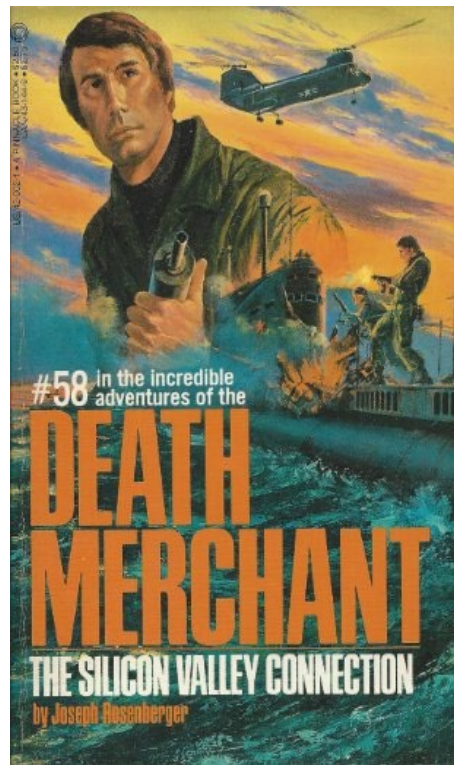
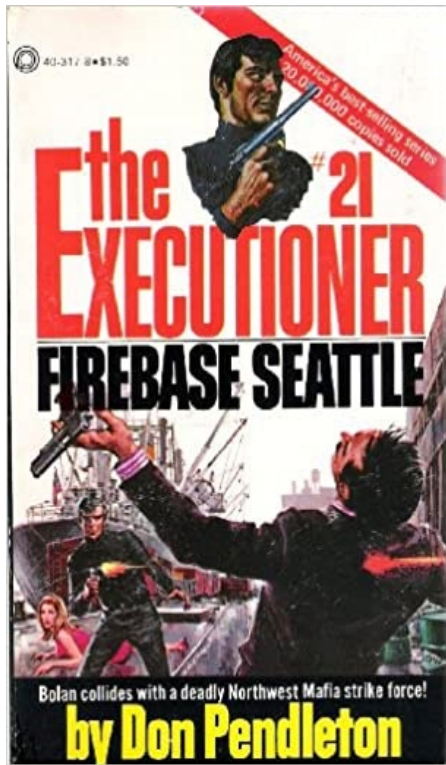
Weird Westerns



More Diversity? Well....

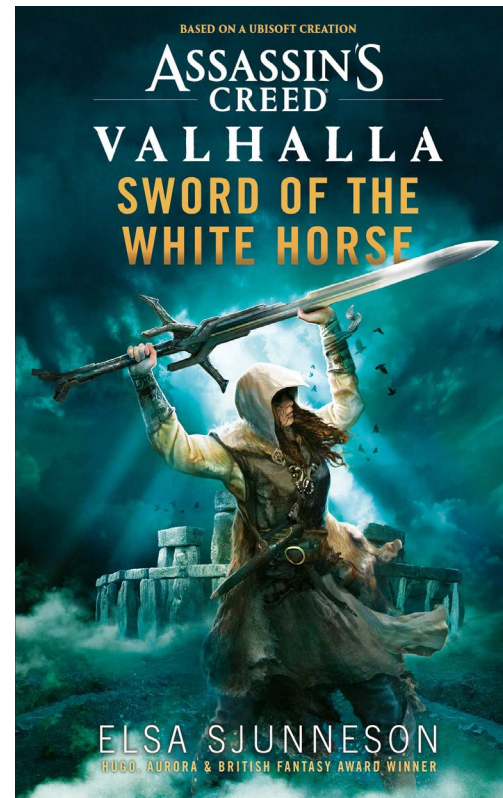


The End of an Era? "Men's Adventure" Series



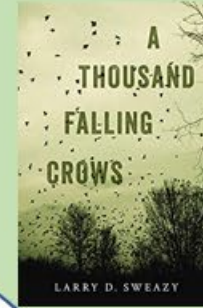
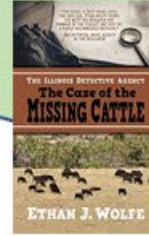
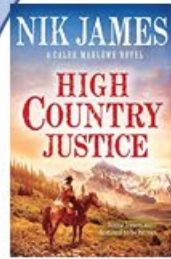
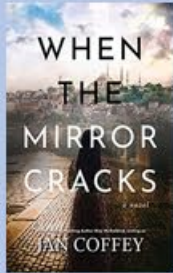
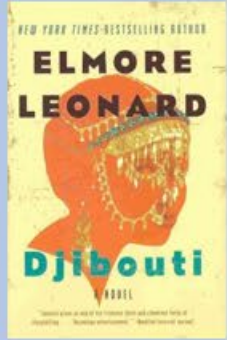
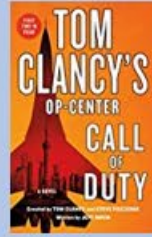
A New Era?

Game-based fiction & LitRPG



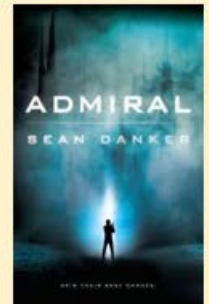
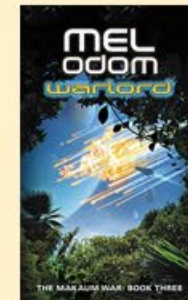
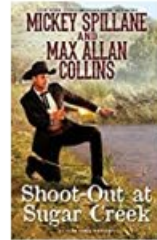
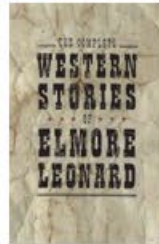
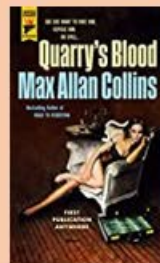
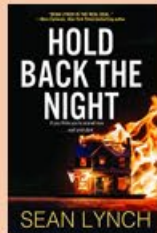
Overlap

Thrillers



Mystery

Westerns



Crime

Science Fiction

Adventure Starter Pack

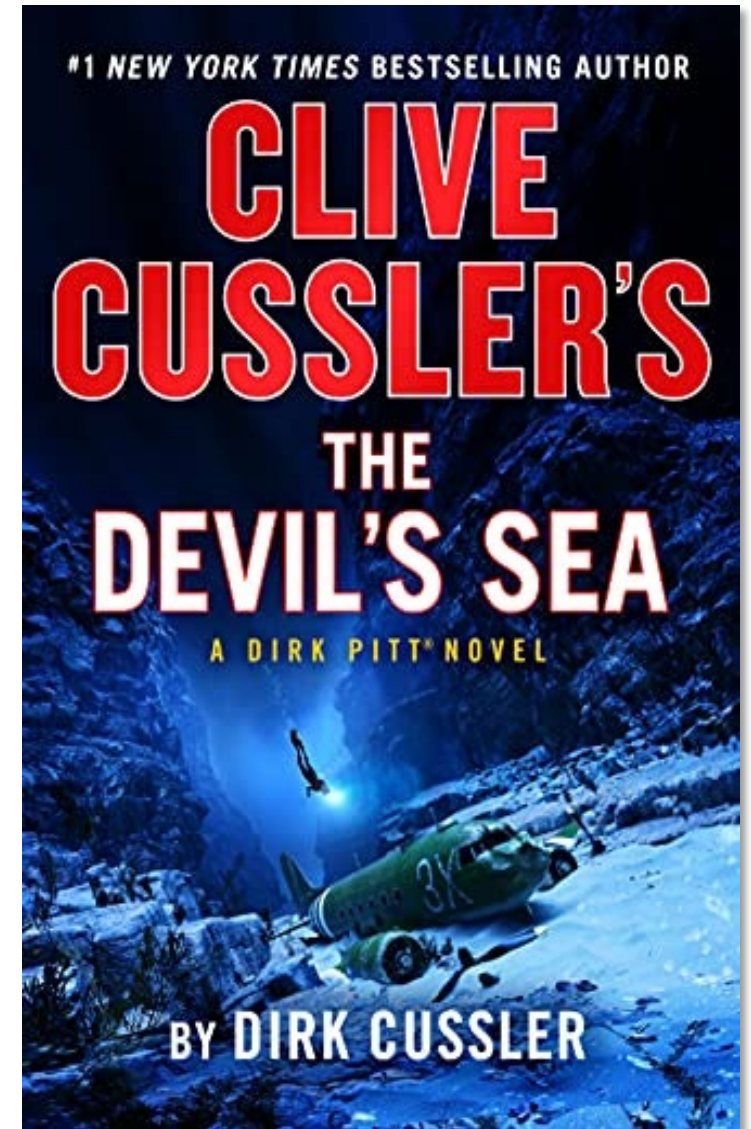
- Representative of genre
- Well-reviewed
- Wide appeal
- Available on audio



The Devil's Sea (Dirk Pitt #26)

by Dirk Cussler (2021)

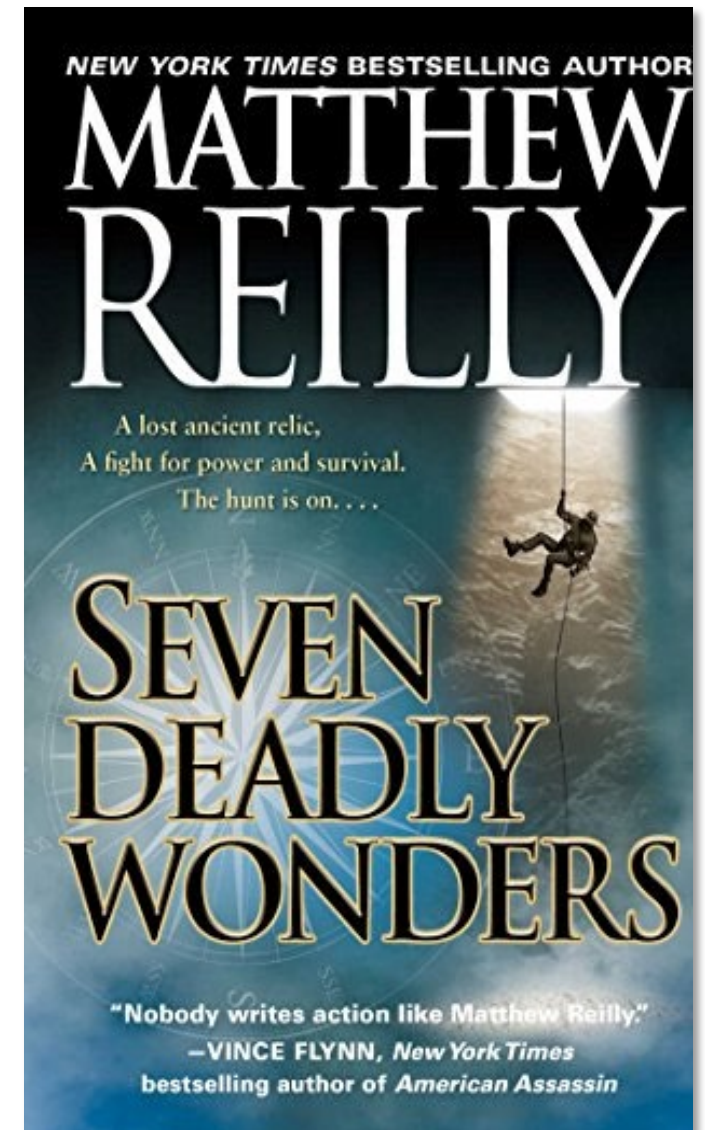
- *The* benchmark adventure series enters a new generation.
- All the elements: globetrotting & deep-sea action, tsunamis, a sacred statue carved from a meteorite, the Dalai Lama!!
- "Where's the Cussler?" is how most Adventure RA begins.



Seven Deadly Wonders

by Matthew Reilly (2006)

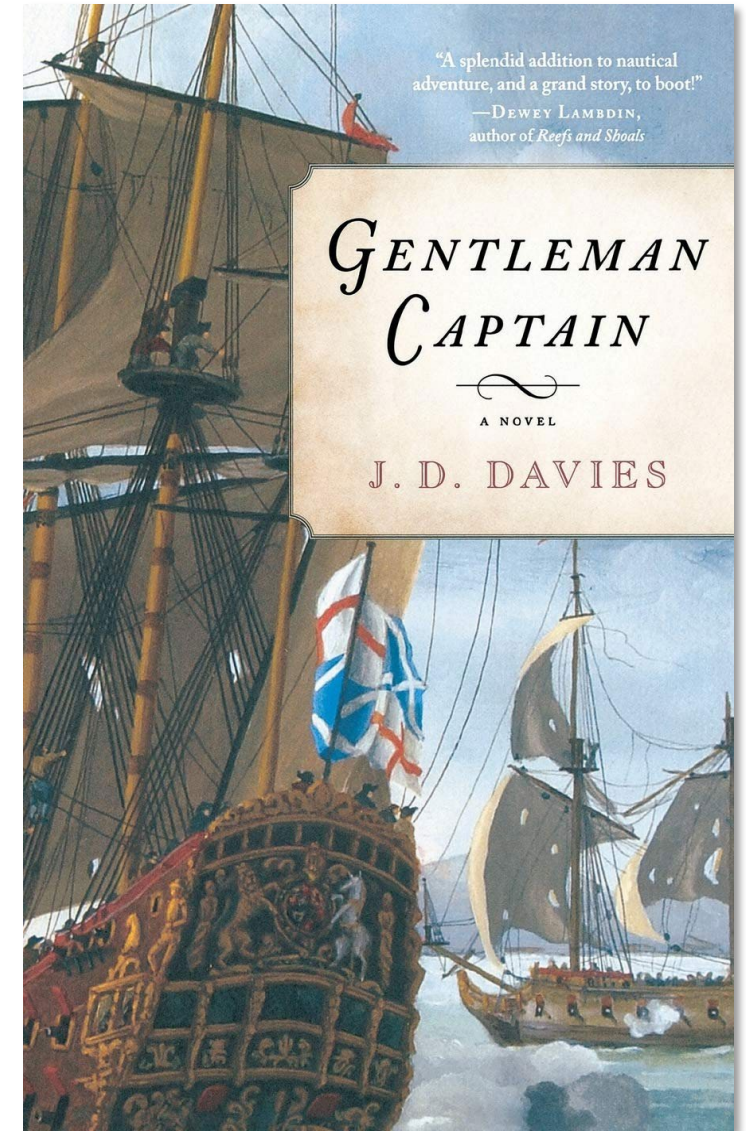
- Adventure fiction to the maximum degree: Reilly goes for it!
- First in Jack West Jr. Countdown.
- Wildly improbable plot, delightfully cartoonish heroes, non-stop action!



Gentleman Captain

by J.D. Davies (2012)

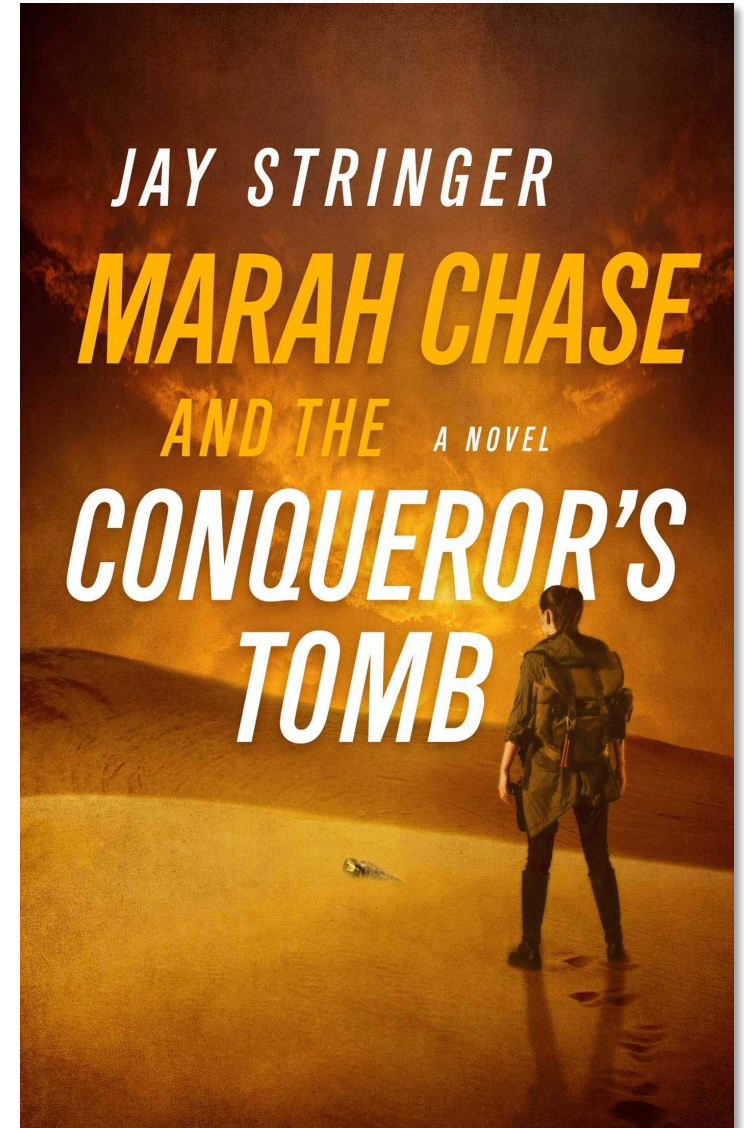
- Excellent lesser-known trilogy debut, on a par with Forester & O'Brian. One to share w/ all those jaded nautical fiction fans.
- Unusual 17th Century setting.
- Perfect balance of rapid-fire action and well-researched history.



Marah Chase and the Conqueror's Tomb

by Jay Stringer (2019)

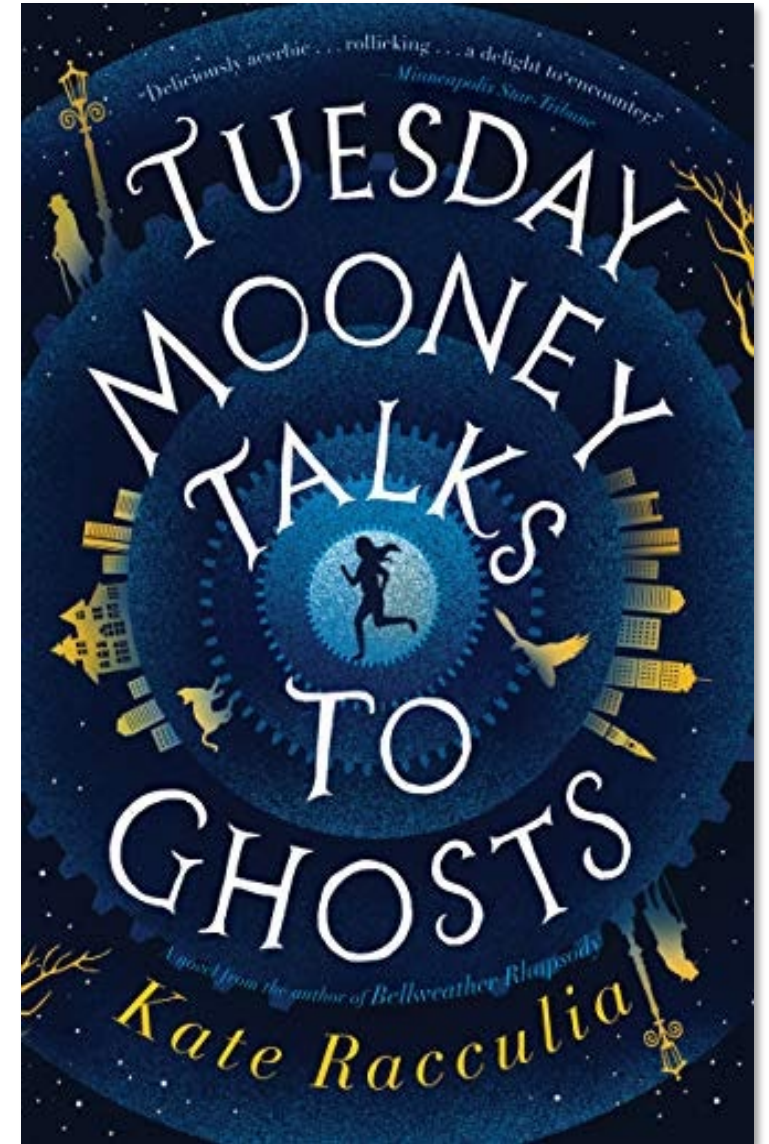
- Freewheeling homage to traditional adventure tropes, with a queer Jewish heroine – what's not to like?
- Fun for younger fans, broadening for older ones.



Tuesday Mooney Talks to Ghosts

by Kate Racculia (2020)

- Great example of genre-blending adventure storytelling for both mainstream and fantasy fans: a great bridge.
- Rag-tag band on a treasure hunt.
- Added depth and heart - satisfying, fresh, unpredictable.



Western Starter Pack

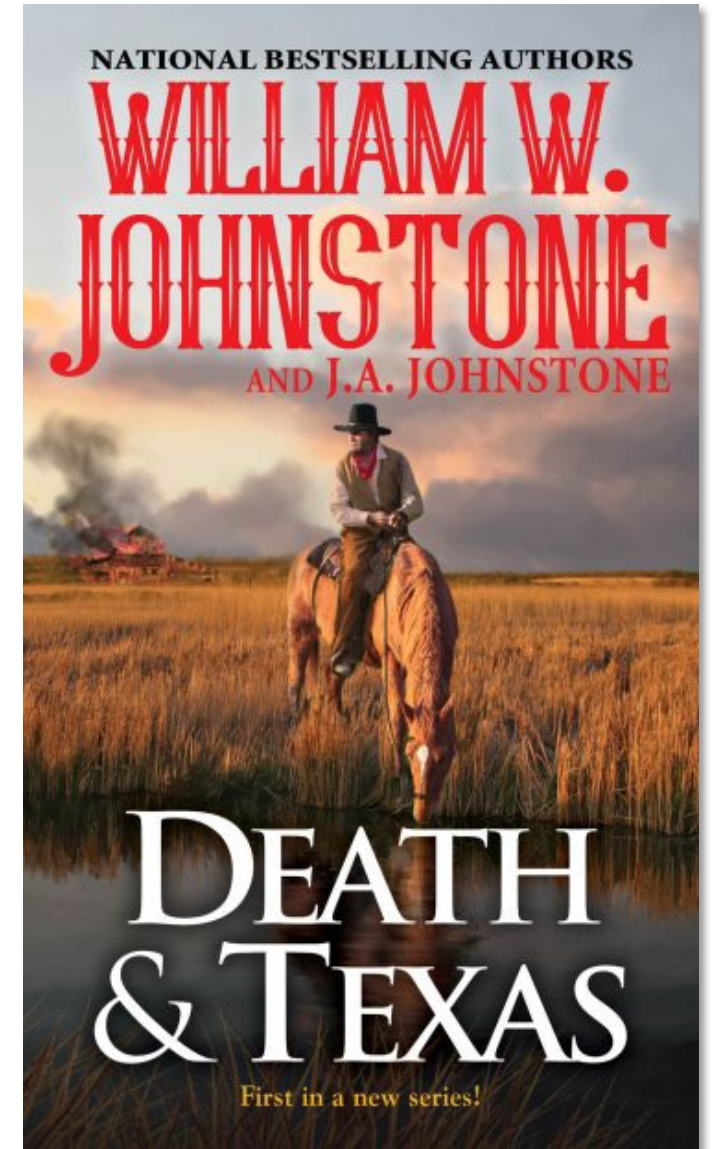
- Representative of genre
- Well-reviewed
- Wide appeal
- Available on audio



Death & Texas

by William Johnstone and
J. A. Johnstone (2022)

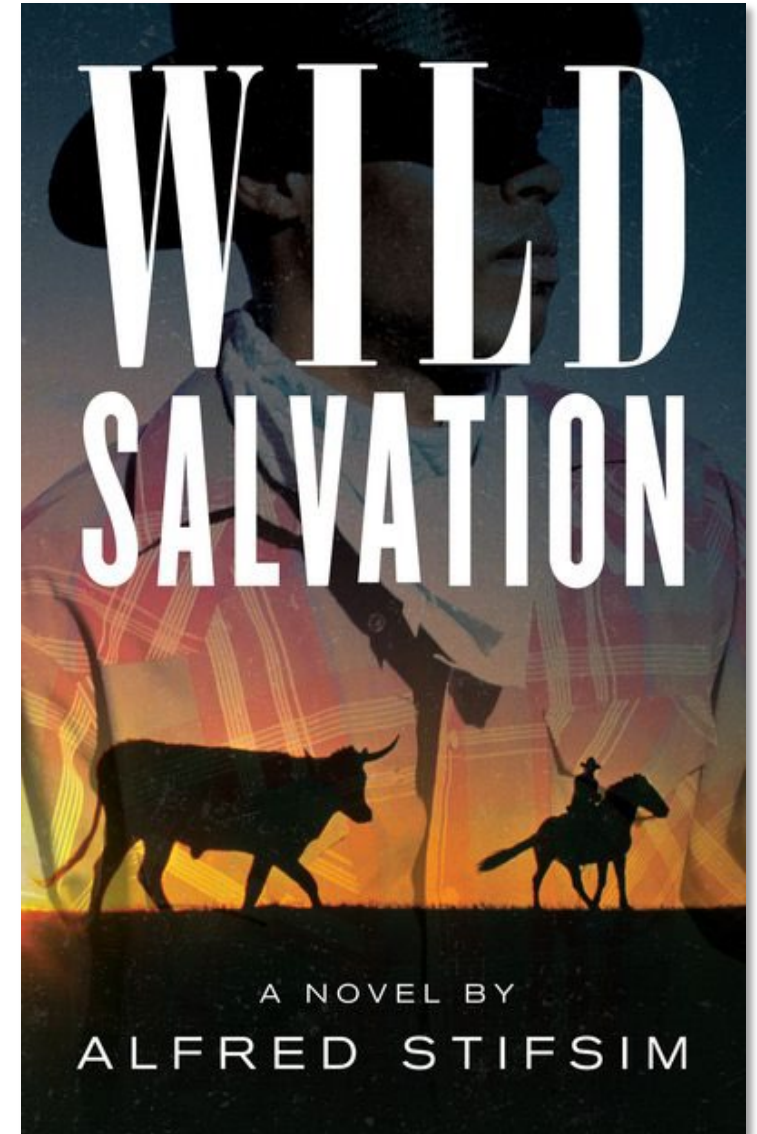
- First in a new series.
- The governor wants to clean up Texas and decides to hire someone outside of the law to get it done.



Wild Salvation

by Alfred Stifsim (2022)

- Innocent Black man accused of assault and facing a lynching, flees into the West.
- Touches on race and gender issues without sacrificing character or plot.

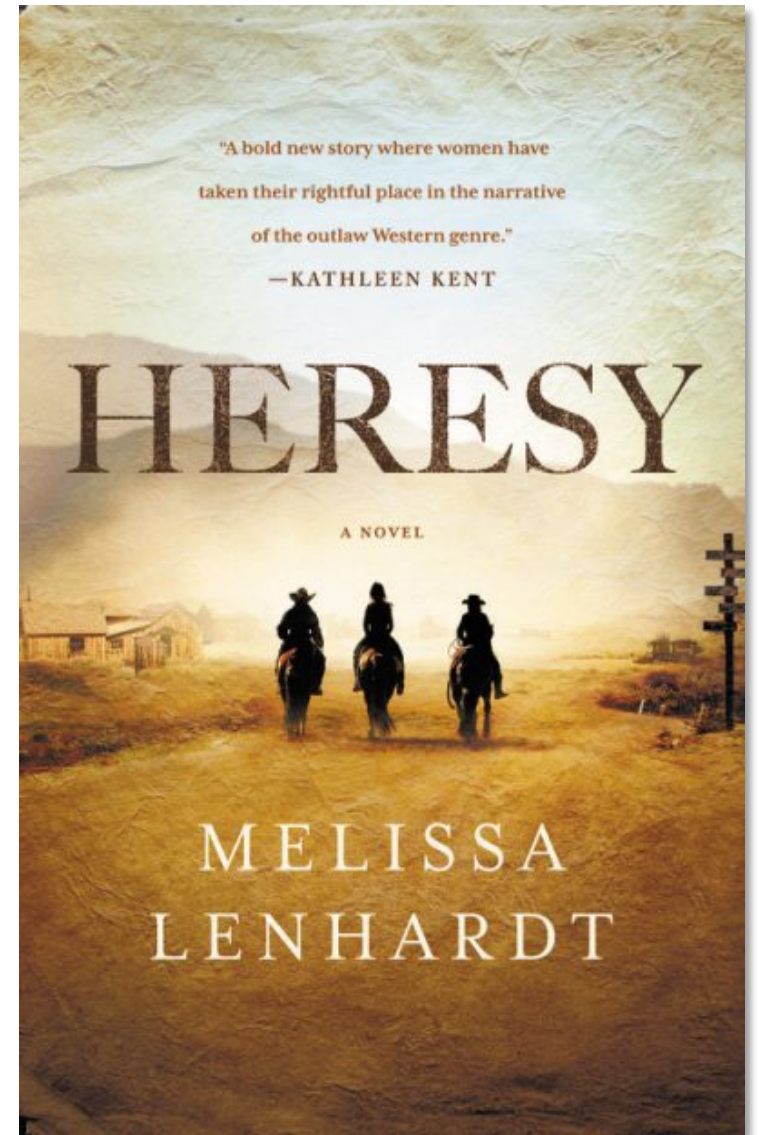


Heresy

by Melissa Lenhardt (2018)

- 2022 Audie winner for Best Multi-Voiced Performance.
- Unusual narrative—including diary entries, clippings, interview transcripts.
- All-female gang of bank robbers.

"An all-out women-driven, queer, transgender, multiracial takeover of the Old West . . . and that's exactly what Melissa Lenhardt delivers in her unapologetically badass western, *Heresy*." - *New York Times*



All Things Left Wild

by James Wade (2020)

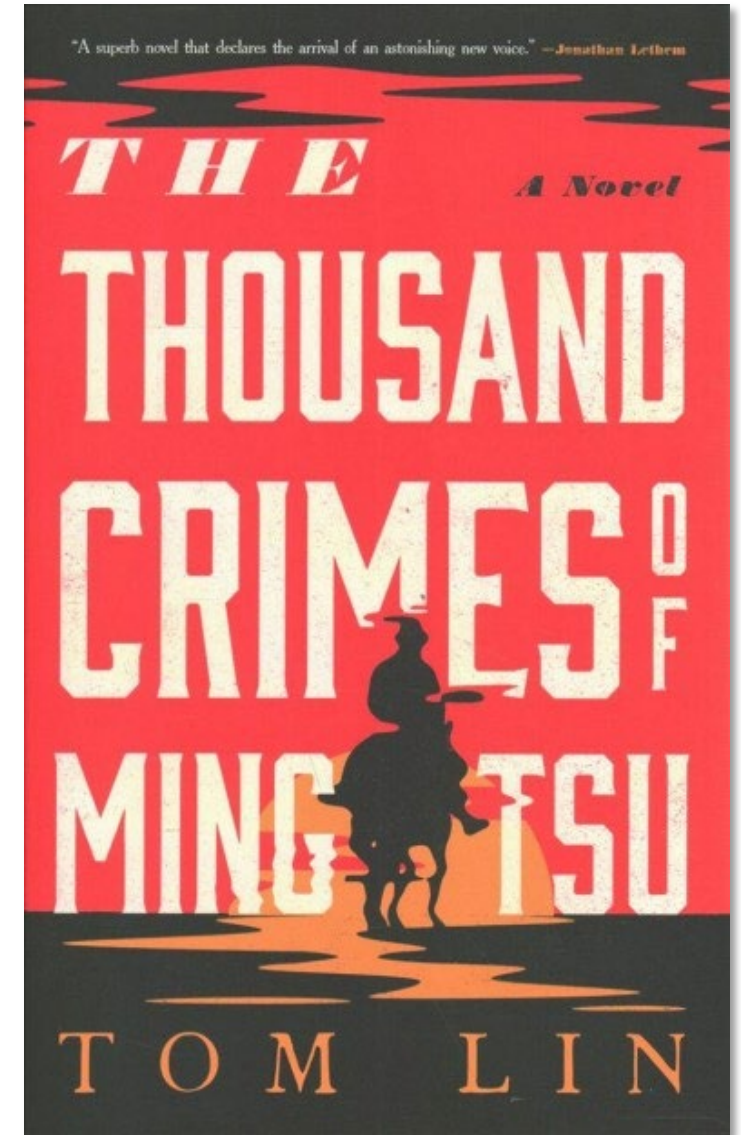
- Revenge
- Outlaws on the run (some more guilty than others)
- Won the 2021 Spur Award for Historical Novel and the 2021 Reading the West Award for Best Debut Novel.



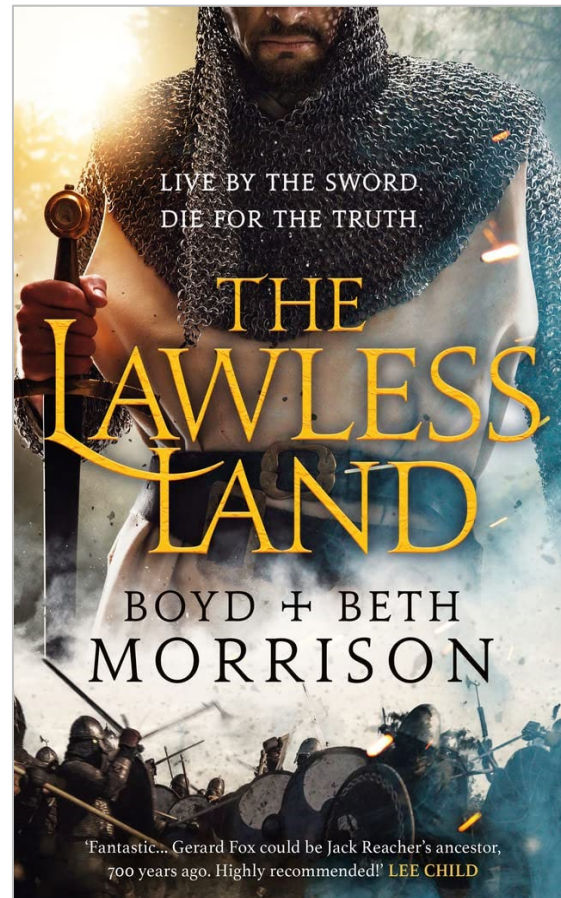
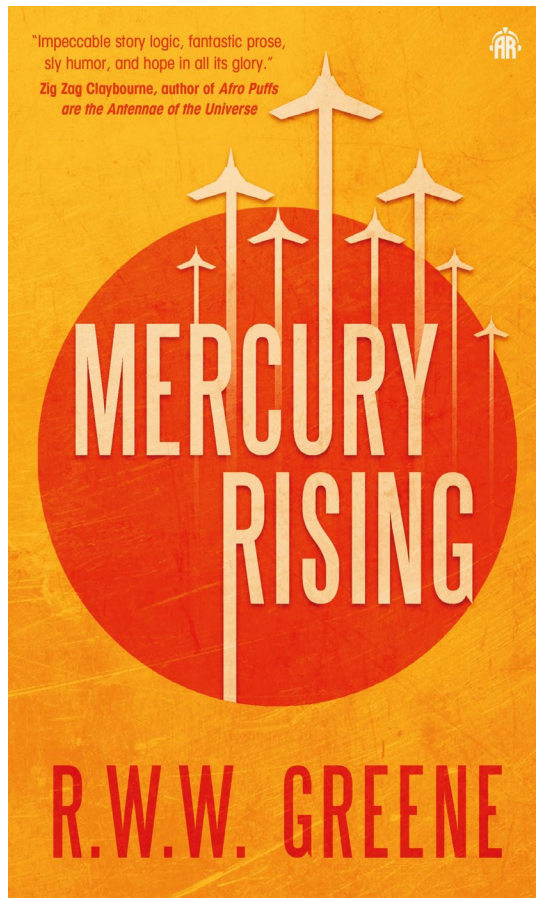
The Thousand Crimes of Ming Tsu

by Tom Lin (2021)

- Revenge
- Culturally Diverse
- Magical Realism
- Winner of the 2021 Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction.



Books we can't wait to read





THANK YOU!

NoveList



FINDING ADVENTURE STORIES & WESTERNS IN NOVELIST

NoveList

