



Author of the week

Roberto Saviano

Roberto Saviano is a fugitive from injustice, said **William Brennan** in *The Atlantic*. Nine years ago, the then-26-year-old Italian journalist published *Gomorra*, a book that exposed the deadly power of the Neapolitan mafia. The



book sold more than 10 million copies worldwide and led to life sentences for 16 criminals; it also tore Saviano's life apart. His parents were forced into hiding. Friends abandoned him rather than risk being targeted. And Saviano joined what he calls "the community of the escorted." The whistleblower, now 35, still cannot go anywhere without several armed guards, or live in any one place very long. "I really hope the public understands," he says, "the blood price I paid for writing these things."

Mafia death threats haven't silenced Saviano, said **Tom Kington** in *The Times* (U.K.). With *ZeroZeroZero*, his new book on the \$400 billion global trade in cocaine, he sheds a harsh light on top players around the world, including members of the 'Ndrangheta, Italy's Calabrian crime syndicate. Before taking up the subject and traveling to several countries to do his reporting, Saviano nearly gave up journalism. But he found the return to muckraking irresistible. "Every hour seems pointless," he writes in the new book, "if you don't dedicate your energies to discovering, flushing out, telling." Even so, Saviano expresses deep regret over the career path he's taken. "I would love to be heroic and say it's been worth it, but it has absolutely not been worth it," he says. "I will never forgive myself for ruining the life of my family."

Best books...chosen by Amy Bloom

Lucky Us, *Amy Bloom's* best-selling novel from last year, has just arrived in paperback. Below, the author of *Away* and two acclaimed short-story collections offers a summer reading list—a mix of crime novels and poetry.

The Beauty by Jane Hirshfield (Knopf, \$26). No one does the everyday and the transcendent like Hirshfield. She understands our inner and outer worlds, the kitchen and the bedroom and all that matters, from birth and death to artichokes and roses that are "the color of a library wall in Venice."

Without by Donald Hall (Mariner, \$15). I never liked Hall's work until I picked up this 1998 collection, published three years after his wife, the great poet Jane Kenyon, died. (If you want someone who understands exactly what your bad, blue days are like—and makes you laugh, too—Kenyon is your woman.) Hall's *Without* is like a beautiful, moving novel of love, illness, mourning, and the first signs of life after grief.

Miracle Fair by Wislawa Szymborska (Norton, \$17). Turn to this one for wit, irony, grace, and an understanding of human nature and human history that seems both God-like and as down-to-earth as coffee with your oldest, wisest friend. ("Some people fleeing some other people. In some country under the sun and some clouds.")

Heat by Ed McBain (Thomas & Mercer, \$14). It's hot, everyone is grumpy, and the rowdy, flawed crew of detectives in Isola (a fictionalized Manhattan) have to root around the art world while dealing with their own problems. McBain is always funny, always gripping, always real.

Ice by Ed McBain (Thomas & Mercer, \$14). It's a terrible blizzard, people are stranded, lost, and freezing to death. Meanwhile, Steve Carella and his team investigate the mysterious, peculiar world of theater people. *Ice* is another first-rate thriller. In the words of critic John Carr: "To say that Ed McBain is a giant among mystery writers is like saying the Colossus of Rhodes was a pretty fair piece of municipal sculpture."

A Great Deliverance by Elizabeth George (Bantam, \$16). George's 1984 novel was the first in another wonderful crime series, this one featuring two cops: the aristocratic Lynley and the grouchy, working-class Havers. English, not American; a pair, not a team; plus dark secrets, serious crime, intelligent dialogue, and surprises that make sense.

Also of interest...in tales of the mega-rich

The Unfortunates

by Sophie McManus (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, \$26)



This remarkable debut novel "merges Old World elegance and modern irony in a brilliant social satire," said Ron Charles in *The Washington Post*. *The Unfortunates* brings to exacting life an imperious heiress who terrorizes her doctors after she develops Parkinson's-like symptoms. She fails, however, to maintain control over a middle-aged son who is sinking a fortune into mounting an opera—a work that inspires "some of the funniest writing I've read in years." It's "wheezing, choke-on-your-laughter funny."

Once Upon a Time in Russia

by Ben Mezrich (Atria, \$28)



Ben Mezrich's "lurid, pulpy" style "can be an acquired taste," said Margaret Quamme in *The Columbus Dispatch*. But in his latest book, the author of *Bringing Down the House* has focused on the post-Cold War rise of a Russian oligarch to provide a thrilling glimpse of that Wild West-like era. As Boris Berezovsky and his allies build an empire in cars, oil, metals, and TV, the story "unfolds in bursts of short scenes tailor-made for the movie adaptation already in the planning stages."

Primates of Park Avenue

by Wednesday Martin (Simon & Schuster, \$26)



This memoir has become notorious for having overstated how many husbands on Manhattan's Upper East Side award their spouses "wife bonuses," said *The Economist*. "Still, it would be a shame to throw out the pedigreed baby with the bathwater," because Wednesday Martin makes "a wryly entertaining guide" to the world of \$50,000 handbags and \$35,000-a-year preschools. *Primates* offers a portrait of extreme wealth that "makes the whole condition seem stressful and unfortunate."

China Rich Girlfriend

by Kevin Kwan (Doubleday, \$27)



This follow-up novel to the 2013 best-seller *Crazy Rich Asians* is "filled with jaw-dropping accounts of opulence," said Nicole Lee in the *Los Angeles Times*. Nick Young and Rachel Chu, now engaged, "remain the clear-eyed observers through which the reader experiences the preposterousness around them." In Shanghai to meet newly discovered relatives, they're nearly trampled by social climbers as Kevin Kwan delivers "another acerbic yet affectionate examination of Asian über-elite social mores."