

Chapter 1 : Helen Simpson | Penguin Random House

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While this relentlessly downbeat collection is entirely composed of poems from between and , it feels far older than that. In contrast to the current moment, the images Houellebecq uses to conjure up the bleakness of capitalism -- commuters, isolated from each other by their Walkmen; microwave dinners for one -- feel a little toothless. They make you want to laugh-sob over one beer too many: Trudging past an old beggar being kicked in the head, wandering through a car park, reluctantly navigating the tourist district, he consistently registers somewhere between numb and suicidal. All three works feature characters who move through the city with a certain weird sadness. Instead, we get motion minus emotion: He never seems to enjoy the city or motion itself so much as a sense of having something to check off his to-do list. Earlier in the poem he clarifies for us. Yet none of these authors are shy about linking their works to a larger political picture. On a skim read, it seems apolitical. But that one exception is more meaningful than it first seems: Because Taipei is the first really convincing novel about the modern precariat worker. There are no stable salaried roles here, instead we get friends who wait tables fine, but hard to fathom how to eke out a living from such a role in New York , work as a gig-by-gig research assistant for a ghostwriter and almost-copywriter for a band, or work as a freelance journalist whose pitch emails languish unanswered. In a world in which the U. Houellebecq is more explicitly savage about what he sees as the false promises of politics. He has no faith in the benevolence of institutions, and we see this in the geography of his latest collection. In Unreconciled hospitals are: The fruits of capitalism are cold comfort for inequality: In recent years there has been a growing acceptance that the two are linked. Research from the World Health Organization and the U. National Research Council and Institute of Medicine support the idea that links between poverty and mental and physical health problems exist, while first-person narratives support the thesis and the Guardian publishes articles honing the argument: If you want to know what Donald Trump thinks about a work-life balance, refer to the man himself: Instead make your work more pleasurable. How could they not? So look to Houellebecq, Lin, Plath for a glimpse into the crystal ball.

Chapter 2 : Vintage Contemporaries: Where You Once Belonged by Kent Haruf (, Paperback) | eBay

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There were seven initial titles. The line was a mix of reprints and originals, and nearly thirty years later the checklist found in the back of the books reads like a ballot for some Cooperstown of late 20th Century fiction. At the time, however, the series was far more renowned for its design: The person who came up with the uniform, De Stijl layout, and the one whose name can be found on the back of those hundred or so books—that was Lorraine Louie. For several years she worked in the Bay Area, at that time a hotbed for graphic design. In 1967, at age 26, she moved to New York. After freelancing briefly, she landed the Vintage Contemporaries job through her new boyfriend—soon husband—fellow graphic designer Daniel Pelavin. But by the early nineties, personnel and tastes within Vintage Contemporaries had changed and the design was phased out. Louie would continue to design covers until her death in 2001. And according to Pelavin, that was just fine. Certainly uniform designs were common in Europe by then, and since VC was a new program altogether I wanted people to identify books in a series that included highly regarded writers—Matthiessen, Carver, etc. What made a book a candidate for the series? Were you looking for shared themes or comparable writing style or anything else in particular? Only that it was terrifically good, each in its own way. There was never any notion of identifying a particular school or style of writing, since every great writer sets his or her own standards. Cormac McCarthy, for instance—why was only *Suttree* re-released in the series and not his earlier novels as well? Indeed, they were better writers. Happily we set that situation right when I moved to Knopf in 1991 and Cormac soon followed. What are some of your favorite Vintage Contemporaries covers? What was Lorraine Louie like to work with? A complete pleasure—incredibly talented, adventurous, and personable. The late Judy Loeser was the art director who hired the late Lorraine Louie as the freelance designer, who conceived the format and typographic design for this unique series. Judy found a sample of my work wedged behind her desk drawer. She called me the summer of 1991 to come to her office with my portfolio. I guess Judy liked what she saw, because she then set up an appointment for me to show Lorraine Louie my work. They hired me to create the cover images for the first seven books of this new series which was going to launch in September of 1991. This was my first commission in trade publishing. In my first meeting with the Vintage Contemporaries staff—Loeser, Louie, and Gary Fisketjon, the editor of VC—we talked about the books and the packaging. The discussion centered on how Gary envisioned a whole new approach to paperbacks with innovative design, and marketing. That day I was given manuscripts to read for some of the books that were to be published. The plan was that I was to come back in a few weeks with concepts and thumbnails of cover images for these titles. Publishing was so creatively and pleasantly loosey goosey back then. It was before the era of submitting a multitude of comps to marketing people, bookseller representatives, and others, where all the parties express their varied opinions. Judy simply responded to my ideas by saying okay, go for it, try it. She called in Gary and told him my very loose ideas. A few days later I called up someone I was friends with at the time, Nelson Smith. I felt he could be the Jaime character and I asked him to meet me downtown near Chambers Street at sunset. I arrived with a small portable strobe, a camera, and a vintage overcoat for Nelson to wear. We started photographing around the Odeon. I felt very much that it should be included in the cover image. I told Nelson to stand on the north corner of Thomas Street and took a few pictures of him in the foreground with the Odeon in the background. I then swung the camera a little to the right and took some shots of the World Trade Center. When I processed the film from the shoot, I did not see the image I had been envisioning for the cover. I would recompose an image using multiple photographs, which then would be reshot. Next I printed it so that it was all one surface. Then in order to blend and smooth out the different images I slowly worked on it with layers of pencil and airbrush work. All this was way before the days of Photoshop. Nelson with his back to the camera, the warm glowing facade of the Odeon, and the icily lit World Trade Center. I cut out the three components, got rid of any extraneous cityscape that was in the background, blended everything in, and

essentially made a small stage for Jaime, the Odeon, and the World Trade Center. The World Trade Center filled my front window. I would never have imagined that of the three components of that iconic cover, the towers would be the first to vanish. We tended to share books and literary discoveries at Williams, and when I finished my first novel naturally I showed it to him first. He wanted an original novel to go along with the reprints for his new series. I was reluctant at first because I wanted a hardcover publication but he convinced me. I loved the Vintage Contemporaries design. My first thought was that the books looked like albums—this was in the days of LPs—and that seemed a good thing, since Gary was trying to appeal to a younger audience. No other books on the market looked like that. It was incredibly evocative and haunting. Ditto for the other books. Vintage Contemporaries was a big hit and it spawned a host of imitators. The Simon and Schuster hardcover jacket was undistinguished. The Vintage jacket was entirely in the spirit of the book, a fair introduction to the book and was, I have heard, the reason a number people bought it. It really attempted to take on the book itself and reimagine it graphically. Yes, there was a kind of family feeling among the authors. I think Gary Fisketjon at Knopf must have been the key to these relationships. He was in at the beginning of the imprint, already editing some of the writers, and eventually editing me. He is an outstanding editor and has always had a sharp eye for emerging writers. Nowadays, strictly literary writers without the prospects of large sales tend to get a stock photograph with unusual title-author graphics. Uniform spines with bold lettering C A R V E R in white against a red field invited buyers to collect these books and display them on their shelves. A grid of pixels on each volume alluded to the comics: Roy Lichtenstein paintings for readers. Fisketjon rolled out his series with dinners and nightclub parties and a major sales push. Vintage Contemporaries filled Manhattan bookstore windows. There were sidewalk sandwich boards, posters, and display bins. Indeed, Ray did have a date with a woman—he and Tess had a standing arrangement to telephone each other at ten on evenings when they were apart. The lovely image, which shows a baby in this setting, was simply presented to me when Vintage took on the book. I was delighted with its general theme though seals would not be at a Chicago beach and very pleased to be in the Vintage series. Mostly murder mysteries and mass-market adult contemporary titles, with a few hardcovers and bestsellers thrown in. Tricia called and said that a new imprint from Random House called Vintage Contemporaries was launching and they were in the process of branding the line. They were looking for something a little edgy, leaning toward surrealism, with a crisp, saturated vibe, as I recall. I had been a photographer for a while and never had any interest in trying to copy what the camera could see. So, the art director at Vintage, Judith Loeser, contacted me through Tricia Weber, and wanted me to do one cover as a test piece to see if my style would be a good fit for the line. I drew up my ideas which were approved, and then I did the painting and shipped it to New York. They liked the piece, and it sort of established the look of the Vintage Contemporaries imprint for several years. I was doing what seemed like almost one a month for several years. Judith would send a manuscript via FedEx, and I would read it and take notes as I read, jotting down ideas for images that resonated with me either on an emotional level, or something that I just thought would make an interesting picture. I would then develop a handful of thumbnail sketches, usually three to five rough ideas, and fax them to the art director. Lorraine was the designer; she developed that amazing, iconic grid with the dots and the square graphic that is so recognizable. She chose the typefaces and established the look of the line. But once that master design was established, she was no longer actively involved with the artists or photographers who created the imagery on the covers. That was all done with the art directors, and they were very much involved with the process. I worked with the AD at every step. We would then discuss the sketches over the phone, I would revise and refine the strongest idea, fax that up, and if approved, would move on to the painting. The whole process, from reading the manuscript to shipping the artwork, was usually about two weeks. The most challenging were the books that were not one novel but a collection of short stories, of which there were several. They were also the most fun to work on, because I could take elements from several different stories and cobble them together into my own fantasy scenario. The painting is hanging in my in-laws home, and they cherish it tremendously. The Sportswriter, by Richard Ford, was a great piece to work on. It was years ago, but I remember the feeling of longing and disconnectedness that the main character, Frank Bascombe, seemed to be feeling in the story.

Chapter 3 : Popular Vintage Contemporaries Books

This time the driver is the car owner's boyfriend-and he is driving too fast. The owner keeps asking him to slow down, but he is intent on showing off or showing power to both the owner and the story's narrator in the back seat.

It daunted me, that somber rock. I preferred to wander in the modern city, imperfect, blaring. The weight and moment of those worked stones promised to make the business of seeing them a complicated one. So much converges there. Beauty, dignity, order, proportion. There are obligations attached to such a visit. Then there was the question of its renown. I saw myself climbing the rough streets of the Plaka, past the discos, the handbag shops, the rows of bamboo chairs. Slowly, out of every bending lane, in waves of color and sound, came tourists in striped sneakers, fanning themselves with postcards, the philhellenes, laboring uphill, vastly unhappy, mingling in one unbroken line up to the monumental gateway. What ambiguity there is in exalted things. We despise them a little. I kept putting off a visit. The ruins stood above the hissing traffic like some monument to doomed expectations. One night as we enter narrative time I was driving with friends back to Athens after a loud dinner in Piraeus and we were lost in some featureless zone when I made a sharp turn into a one-way street, the wrong way, and there it was again, directly ahead, the Parthenon, floodlit for an event, some holiday or just the summer sound-andlight, floating in the dark, a white fire of such clarity and precision I was startled into braking too fast, sending people into the dashboard, the backs of seats. We sat there a moment, considering this vision. It was a street in decline, closed shops and demolition, but the buildings at the far end framed the temple perfectly. Someone in the back seat said something, then a car came toward us, horn blowing. The driver stuck an arm out the window to gesture. Then his head appeared, he started shouting. The structure hung above us like a star lamp. I gazed a moment longer and backed out of the street. I asked Ann Maitland, who sat alongside, what the man had called me. We three were in the front seat. There was always someone at dinner who was in town to do business with one of the regulars. They tended to be heavysset men, these guests, northern, raw. Eager faces, strong accents. They drank too much and left in the morning. Two and a half months, is it, David? The man who turns his back to the peerless summit. The thing is right there. It was a role he found himself comfortable in, being the eldest among us. It almost forces us to ignore it. Or at least to resist it. We have our self-importance. We also have our inadequacy. The former is a desperate invention of the latter. Give us something to believe in. A shaved head would do wonders for this group. Lindsay knows what I mean. Middle of the night. In her Pan Am flight socks. You just wanted to hug her, you know? Her hair kind of delectably frazzled. You wanted to give her a brownie and a glass of milk. We got him out easily enough. Then I dropped the others and went home. I was living in a residential area that curls around the lower slopes of Lycabettus Hill. Most of the people I knew were here or nearby. The deep terraces spill over with lantana and jasmine, the views are panoramic, the cafes full of talk and smoke into the early hours. Americans used to come to places like this to write and paint and study, to find deeper textures. Now we do business. I poured myself some soda water and sat outside awhile. From the terrace the city stretched to the gulf in smoky vales and rises, a seamless concrete village. Rare nights, for whatever atmospheric reasons, you could hear planes taking off down by the water. The sound was mysterious, full of anxious gatherings, a charged rumble that seemed a long time in defining itself as something besides a derangement of nature, some onrushing nameless event. The phone rang twice, then stopped. I flew a lot, of course. We were a subculture, business people in transit, growing old in planes and airports. We were versed in percentages, safety records, in the humor of flaming death. We knew the various aircraft and their configurations and measured this against the distances we were flying. We could distinguish between bad-weather categories and relate them to the guidance system of the plane we were on. We advised each other on which remote cities were well maintained, which were notable for wild dogs running in packs at night, snipers in the business district at high noon. We knew where martial law was in force, where body searches were made, where they engaged in systematic torture, or fired assault rifles into the air at weddings, or abducted and ransomed executives. This was the humor of personal humiliation. This is time totally lost to us. We take no sense impressions with us, no voices, none of the windy blast of aircraft on the tarmac, or the

white noise of flight, or the hours waiting. Nothing sticks to us but smoke in our hair and clothes. It is dead time. It never happened until it happens again. Then it never happened. I took a boat in two stages to Kouros, an obscure island in the Cycladic group. My wife and son lived there in a small white house with geraniums in olive oil cans on the roof edge and no hot water. Kathryn was writing reports on the excavation at the south end of the island. Our boy, who was nine, was working on a novel. Everyone is writing away. When I got there the house was empty. Nothing moved in the streets. I crouched on the roof, hands clasped above my eyes. The village was a model of irregular geometry, the huddled uphill arrangement of whitelime boxes, the street mazes and archways, small churches with blue talc domes. Laundry hung in the walled gardens, always this sense of realized space, common objects, domestic life going on in that sculpted hush. Stairways bent around houses, disappearing. It was a sea chamber raised to the day, to the detailing light, a textured pigment on the hills. There was something artless and trusting in the place despite the street meanders, the narrow turns and ravels. Striped flagpoles and aired-out rugs, houses joined by closed wooden balconies, plants in battered cans, a willingness to share the oddments of some gathering-up. Passageways captured the eye with one touch, a sea green door, a handrail varnished to a nautical gloss. A heart barely beating in the summer heat, and always the climb, the small birds in cages, the framed approaches to nowhere. Doorways were paved with pebble mosaics, the terrace stones were outlined in white. The door was open. I went inside to wait. Was it possible to find in the simple furniture, in the spaces between the faded walls, something about my wife and son that had been hidden from me during our life together in California, Vermont and Ontario? We make you wonder if you are the outsider in this group. The meltemi started blowing, the nagging summer wind. I stood by the window, waiting for them to appear. White water flashed outside the bay. Cats slipped out of hidden places in the rough walls and moved stretching into alleyways. The first of the air booms came rolling across the afternoon, waves from some distant violence, making the floor tremble slightly, window frames creak, causing plaster dust to trickle between abutting walls with an anxious whispering sound. Men were using dynamite to fish. Shadows of empty chairs in the main square. A motorcycle droning in the hills.

Chapter 4 : Vintage Books - Wikipedia

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Chapter 5 : The Guest Room (Vintage Contemporaries) by Bohjalian, Chris | eBay

Editor Gary Fisketjon launched Vintage Contemporaries, a paperback imprint of Random House, in September There were seven initial titles. By decade's end, there would be close to

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Chapter 9 : The Names (Vintage Contemporaries) - PDF Free Download

In the Driver's Seat is not to be missed." " Newsday "This wicked little book dares you to laugh at dirty, serious things." " St. Petersburg Times "Helen Simpson's short stories read like cautionary tales about the ravages of parenthood, harrowing dispatches from the front lines of middle-class family life.