

Feeling a post-holiday slump? Get back on track with these brand-new paperbacks

By **Moira Macdonald**

The Seattle Times

Still winter? Check. Still pandemic? Check. Need a new book? Check, check, check. Visit a local indie bookstore — they're probably having a post-holiday slump too — and pick up a new paperback, maybe one of these brand-new ones.

'THE SWALLOWED MAN'

by **Edward Carey**

Author and visual artist Carey ("Little") in this novel takes on the tale of Pinocchio, but from a decidedly different angle: An Italian woodcutter, searching for the wooden puppet who came to life and ran away, is swallowed by a giant fish; the book takes place within that belly's "watery purgatory." "Fans of [Carey's] macabre yet oddly satisfying visual work will have much to enjoy here," wrote Washington Post reviewer Eric Nguyen, adding, "This isn't the 'Pinocchio' of your childhood. Instead, Carey has written something more cerebral, an existential fairy tale for adults told by an old artist considering the tragedy of life."

'LET ME TELL YOU WHAT I MEAN'

by **Joan Didion**

Arriving in paperback just weeks after

Didion's death in December 2021, this volume collects 12 of her essays, previously published between 1968 and 2000, on topics ranging from Martha Stewart to Hemingway to the act of writing itself. "What's particularly salient is her trademark farsightedness, which is especially striking decades later," wrote NPR reviewer Heller McAlpin. "But however welcome, there's a wistfulness to this book, for it is impossible to read without wishing Didion were weighing in on how the center still cannot hold and things continue to fall apart in the 21st century."

'THE BLACK CHURCH: THIS IS OUR STORY, THIS IS OUR SONG'

by **Henry Louis Gates Jr.**

Black History Month is upon us and this New York Times bestseller (with an accompanying PBS series) would make for timely reading. Gates covers five centuries of Christianity in Black America, examining the history of the Black church and its intersection with slavery, oppression, music, politics and more. "In Gates' telling, the Black church, too, shines bright even as the nation itself moves uncertainly through the gloaming," wrote New York Times reviewer Jon Meacham, "seeking justice on earth — as it is in heaven."

'MANTEL PIECES: ROYAL BODIES AND OTHER WRITING FROM THE LONDON REVIEW OF BOOKS'

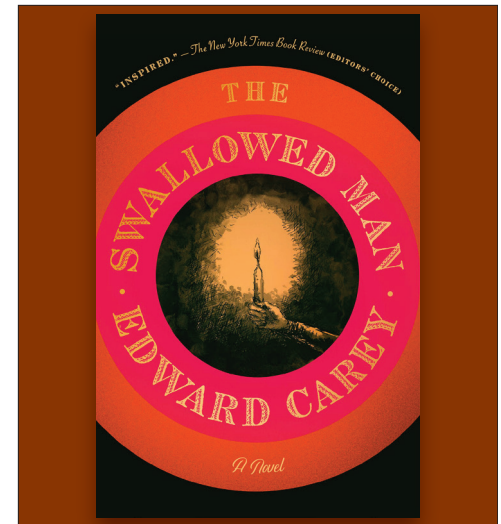
by **Hilary Mantel**

You wonder how many years Mantel was saving up that title pun? In any case, this one should be a treat for the throngs who loved the British author's bestselling (and Man Booker Prize-winning) "Wolf Hall" trilogy about the rise and fall of Thomas Cromwell. It's a collection spanning three decades of writing, on Tudor England and numerous other topics. Reviewer Elizabeth Lowry in *The Guardian* noted, "Ferocious, witty and unapologetic, these essays remind us how dangerous it is to go about in the world, as she writes in 'Royal Bodies,' 'unfortified by irony, uninformed by history.'"

'BLOOD GROVE'

by **Walter Mosley**

The 14th installment in Mosley's splendid Easy Rawlins mystery series is set in 1969 California. Easy, who finally now has his own small detective agency, is approached by a young Vietnam vet who isn't sure if he's a murderer. "Like his influences Hammett, Chandler and Himes, Mosley wants readers to be immersed in the chaos of evil," wrote Washington Post reviewer Maureen Corrigan. "The ability to



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simultaneously keep us readers in confusion and in thrall marks Mosley — winner of the National Book Foundation's 2020 Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters — as a mystery master."

'THE FIVE WOUNDS'

by **Kirstin Valdez Quade**

Quade's debut novel, shortlisted for the 2022 Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction, takes place during a year in a small New Mexico town, as multiple generations of a family converge. "In this modern interpretation of the five wounds Jesus suffered on the Cross — perhaps a metaphor for the emotional wounds of childhood that continue into adulthood — Quade has created a world bristling with compassion and humanity," wrote New York Times reviewer Alexandra Chang.

