

the BOOK NOOK 6 new paperbacks for a refreshing spring read

Moira Macdonald
The Seattle Times

(TNS) — Need some fresh fiction (or semi-fictionalized memoir) for spring? Here are six good bets, newly out in paperback.

Happy reading!

“BECOMING DUCHESS GOLDBLATT”

by Anonymous (HMH Books)

Quite possibly the greatest book ever to be born from a pseudonymous Twitter account, this nonfiction gem is written by a reclusive real-life writer who created a wise, enchanting online persona for herself, inspired by the Frans Hals painting “Portrait of an Elderly Lady.” (Sample recent tweet: “I’ve left a cardboard box lined with old towels by the back door. When my sadness comes crawling home in the wee hours, it can sleep it off outside.”)

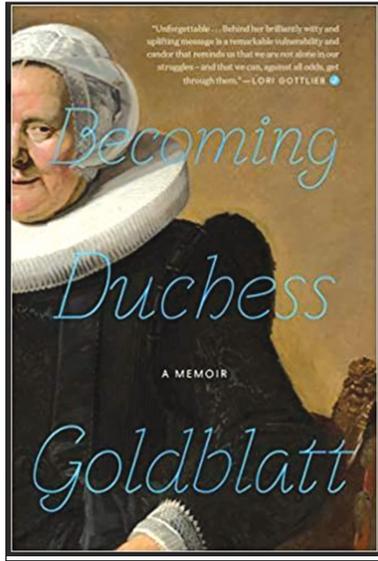
Duchess Goldblatt wants the world to be a better place; by the time you’ve finished this moving, funny memoir, it will be.

“IF I HAD YOUR FACE”

by Frances Cha
(Random House)

Cha’s debut novel, set in contemporary Seoul, South Korea, follows four young women making their way through a world in which success seems dictated by appearance.

“At first you might make the mistake of thinking Cha’s story is all about wealth and plastic surgery and the pursuit of an impossible standard of beauty,” wrote New



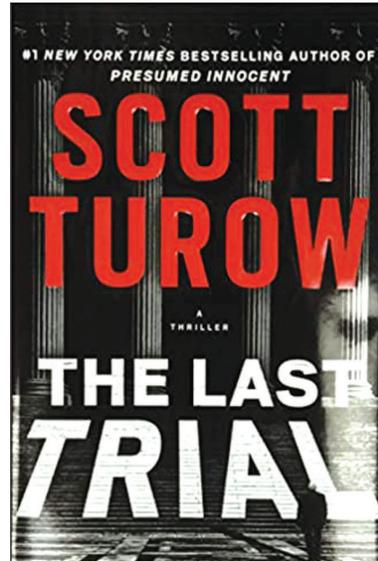
York Times reviewer Elisabeth Egan. “But take a closer look and you’ll find the sisterhood at the heart of this ambitious book. It’s the scaffolding — and also, occasionally, the wrecking ball.”

“THE CACTUS LEAGUE”

by Emily Nemens (Picador)

Need a good baseball novel for spring? This one’s a delight, written by a former Seattleite who said she was inspired by going to Mariners games with her father. Set during spring training, the book follows a series of people connected to professional baseball: a coach, a player’s wife, a sports agent, a fan.

Reading it last year, I wrote, “We get inside their heads, one by one, and watch as their stories gradually and gracefully converge under the cool, late-February Arizona sunshine — a complex structure that Nemens makes look as easy



as a major-leaguer nonchalantly catching a line drive.”

“ALL ADULTS HERE”

by Emma Straub
(Penguin)

Straub, master of sunny vacation novels (“The Vacationers,” “Modern Lovers”), centers this novel on a 68-year-old widow belatedly wondering what kind of parent she had been.

The book is “deliciously funny and infectiously warm — a clever blend of levity and poignant insights,” wrote Washington Post reviewer Angela Haupt. “Straub’s flair for irony and wit shine, and she puts a fresh (and progressive) spin on the age-old multigenerational family saga.”

“THE LAST TRIAL”

by Scott Turow (Grand Central Publishing)

Turow’s 1987 novel “Presumed Innocent” (which I recently reread; it holds up superbly) is one of the great courtroom thrillers. His latest novel lets us check in, for perhaps the last time, with recurring character Alejandro “Sandy” Stern, the defense attorney in “Presumed Innocent” and a frequent name in Turow’s pages; he’s now 85, ailing, and wondering if he’s facing his last case.

New York Times reviewer Janet Maslin wrote, “In this meticulously devised courtroom drama, rich with character detail, Turow again demonstrates what he does best: roll out a complex, keenly observed legal case yet save a boatload of surprises for its ending.”

“SHARKS IN THE TIME OF SAVIORS”

by Kawai Strong Washburn
(Picador)

A PEN/Hemingway Award for Debut Novel finalist, Washburn’s novel focuses on a working-class Hawaiian family, taking place over many years and beginning with a gripping sequence in which a child is saved from drowning by sharks.

“By turns lyrical and gritty, a moving family story focuses on the aftermath of miracles,” wrote Kirkus Reviews in a starred review. The stories of the grown children “go in unexpected directions, from hilarious to heartbreaking. ... Striking style, memorable characters, and a believably miraculous premise add up to a beautifully crafted first novel.”

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