



Season 5, Episode 39: Our Favorite Publishers and Imprints

Mon, May 08, 2023 • 47:45

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:10

Hey readers. Welcome to the Currently Reading podcast. We are bookish best friends who spend time every week talking about the books that we've read recently. And as you know, we won't shy away from having strong opinions. So get ready.

Kaytee Cobb 00:23

We are live on a chit chat, heavy on the book talk and our descriptions will always be spoiler free. Today we'll discuss our current reads, a bookish deep dive and then we'll visit the fountain.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:33

I'm Meredith Monday Schwartz, a mom of four and full time CEO living in Austin, Texas. And I don't do it often, but sometimes I love to fall down a bookish rabbit hole.

Kaytee Cobb 00:43

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico and sometimes a book failure is a mom win. This is episode number 39 of season five. And we are so glad you're here.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:54

Kaytee, your bite size intros even when you come up with them on the fly are always so good. You're very good at that.

Kaytee Cobb 01:00

Meredith, we both forgot to create bite sized intros today. So we had to do those right before we started.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:05

Quick. Yeah, yeah. But yours are always really good. Okay. All right. So we are so glad to be here today. We'll let you know right up at the top that we're going to be talking about publishing houses. We're going to be talking about the big publishing houses, we're going to be talking about maybe the not so big ones that are consistent wins for us. This is a really interesting, deep dive that I deep dove on and wasn't expecting to so I'm really, really excited about this. You too. Yes. All right. So before we do that, let's start out the way we always do with our bookish moment of the week. Kaytee, what have you got?

Kaytee Cobb 01:38

All right, Meredith. So as you know, last week, I finished recording with you. Within about an hour and a half, I texted you that I was on my way to the emergency room with Levi my middle son. Yeah. Poor buddy. He had had an unfortunate incident where the trajectory that he was running along met the trajectory that his little brother had established for the rock he threw. So the rock and the eyebrow met in a very bloody way. It hit him in the side of the head cut his eyebrow open. He was gushing blood down to his knees. He had both knees. It was... head wounds are the worst. Yes. And it was dramatic. And so I you know, I went into like power mom mode, got him cleaned up, put a like cold compress, wet compress on it and hustled out the door to the ER. I had zero other priorities. I didn't grab a snack. I didn't grab a book. And my phone wasn't even that well charged. So I like I had some charge, but I couldn't use it for an audiobook while we were there. I was bookless, and it was terrible. I mean, it was terrible. He was bleeding. And also it was terrible, because I was bookless.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 02:43

Well and because time time stops in the ER, I mean, time just stops correct.

Kaytee Cobb 02:48

And the state of New Mexico is severely under served for medicine. So we had a like a bloody head wound and we were there for four hours to get three stitches, but I raised my kid right and this was my mom win so even while holding a bloody towel to his head, Levi remember to grab his Kindle, where he was quickly devouring his first galley just for him. Thanks to my Trope Thursday partner Bunmi Ishola. She sent him a galley of a middle grade book. He ran into a snag though because his head hurt and as I was blocking it with a towel, so he wanted to read but couldn't. That's where the mom win comes in. Once we got into a room in the fast track area that still took four hours, I offered to read aloud to him, so I jumped in at exactly 50% read to him while we waited for the numbing ointment while we waited for the doctor while we waited for the nurse and waited and waited and waited. He just laid there. And each time we got interrupted, he'd asked me to read to him again. So my reader fail turned into a mom win, which then became my bookish moment of the week.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:49

Oh, well, I'm that is a complete mom win that he thought to grab his Kindle on the way out. He's bleeding from his head. And yet he I mean, what a smart smart kid. And how cool is it that he gets to read galleys. That's really fun. Oh

Kaytee Cobb 04:03

my gosh, he was so excited. He finished it. He might get to have a blurb in the marketing material. No, I mean, he's just thrilled.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 04:11

Oh, that is so fun. I'm so so happy about that and happy that he is going to be totally okay, and probably have a super sexy little scar right there.

Kaytee Cobb 04:20

what I told him. It's weird to be like Levi, you're nine, but this is gonna be super sexy one day and also your my kid like,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 04:26

yeah, right. Exactly. I felt weird when it left my mouth too.

Kaytee Cobb 04:30

So yeah.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 04:33

No, no, keep that in. It's okay. We can understand that. We know we're speaking to future Levi when we write about this. Okay. All right. Well, my bookish moment of the week was really very simple. I have gotten to spend all week long, getting the most wonderful DMS and calm getting into conversations with bookish friends that I hadn't spoken to before, because they're planning reading retreats. And so they've had various questions. about all the different kinds of logistical things, but more than anything, they just want to share their excitement that they have a reader retreat on the calendar because we talked about how ours had gone and what we would do the same and what we would do differently last week, and it just made me really, really happy. Very few things make me as happy as readers getting together and taking pictures together. Like you posted one of your reader retreat with Katie, your reading partner, and it just makes my heart so so happy. So plan those retreats, whether you do it yourself, whether you do it at home yourself, you don't have to go anywhere. You don't have to spend any money. You just have to carve out the time, in whatever way your life right now allows you to do it. So really fun week

Kaytee Cobb 05:44

so fun. We actually got a DM I don't know if you've seen those yet, Meredith but somebody said, I would like one of Meredith's reading retreats sweatshirts with the same schedule on the back, just their schedule, so it really did inspire so many people.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 05:58

She wants a sweatshirt that says forced reading retreat. You're gonna like it whether you like it or not.

Kaytee Cobb 06:03

Yep, correct. She wants obligatory book talk, compulsory book talk all of it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:08

Oh my gosh, free time. This is where you can call home. That's the one that just makes me laugh so hard. Oh my gosh. Okay. All right, Kaytee, let's talk about our current reads. What have you been reading?

Kaytee Cobb 06:17

All right. My first book this week is called The Sunbearer Trials by Aiden Thomas. Aiden Thomas is the author of The Cemetery Boys which I read about a year and a half ago and really loved so I was excited to pick up their new novel as well. Let me tell you about it. The Sunbearer Trials is a young

adult fantasy novel about a young semidios who must compete in a deadly tournament to save his kingdom. Each decade the sun's power must be replenished, so it personally the sun named Sol, Sol, which I know you like, personally chooses 10 semidioses, which are half Gods between 13 and 18 years old to compete in the Sunbearer trials. This is a series of challenges where the teams compete for points. The winner carries life and light to all the temples in the land all the sun temples but the biggest loser will be sacrificed to the sun god, human sacrifice. Oh, no. Yeah, it's it gets a little bloody. Teo is a jade semidios. There are different levels in this world based on different types of stone, one of a rare group of people who can wield the sun's power. He's 17. He's the trans son of Quetzal, the goddess of birds, but he's not worried about being chosen because Sol almost exclusively chooses gold semiosis. So of course, he's safe, right? No problem here. But not so fast. Where's our story, if there's not a not so fast. Teo is chosen along with a 13 year old child of mala suerte, the god of bad luck. Teo and Xio must compete in the trials, a series of five deadly challenges that will test their strength, their courage and their magic. If he fails, the whole world will be doomed, not just Teo. Oh no. The teams form unlikely alliances, protect each other or sabotage each other and try to avoid the last play spot that guarantees certain death through sacrifice. This is currently billed as a duology. And when I finished I wrote in my review, that you could read the whole thing as a standalone if you skip or ignore the final chapter, which for some people, like myself is very important to know going in. It has elements of the Hunger Games in it, which you probably got a little from the setup, and is billed as Hunger Games meets Percy Jackson, which I will admit that I still haven't read much to my preteens chagrin. The Mexican lore and mythology woven throughout are excellent. And I loved rooting for an underdog the whole way through. It was put on my radar by Jason Headley, who may not sound familiar to you until I remind you that that is the creator behind the account known as @ezeekat on Instagram, and Tiktok. He's one of my favorite follows over there, and I adore everything he creates. This was an easy sell for me, a huge fan of diverse mythology based fantasy. Aiden Thomas like I said also wrote The Cemetery Boys which I gave five stars to in early 2022. This was another knock out of the park. I'm so glad Jason / Eezeekat made sure that I knew about it even though he doesn't know I exist. This is The Sunbearer Trials by Aiden Thomas.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:24

Although you know Kaytee, we should tell everybody we'll just tell everybody right now we would love for Jason slash ezeekat to come be interviewed on currently reading because he's such a great reader. And he's so funny.

Kaytee Cobb 09:35

I think they can make it happen for us. I think if we got enough people commenting,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:40

right, we've asked but we haven't heard back yet. I'm sure he gets just a million people asking for those sorts of things. But maybe our listeners could convince him because I think he would be hilarious to talk to. He is so so funny. Okay, all right. Kaytee, my first book of the week is a book that's coming out on May 23. So if you you need a book because you're going on a vacation in June and you need that perfect beach read, this is a book that you're going to want to get either on your library hold list or you're going to want to put a pre order in at your local indie bookstore. It's The Senator's Wife by Liv Constantine. Oh, here's the setup. At the start of our book, we meet DC philanthropist Sloane Chase

and Senator Whit Montgomery. Now they each lost their respective spouses two years before our story starts. They're together now and working to embrace their new life together, as Sloane returns to the world of White House dinners and political small talk, this time with her new husband at her side. She's also preparing for an upcoming surgery, the latest in a series of medical challenges that are caused by her lupus which she's had since her 20s. With their hectic schedules, they decide that hiring a home health aide will give Sloane the support and independence that she needs post surgery and they find the perfect fit in Athena Karras, who I'm sure is a perfectly lovely woman with absolutely no ghosts and skeletons in her closet. Don't you think Kaytee?

Kaytee Cobb 11:07

Absolutely right. Nothing wrong with that.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 11:09

At first of course Athena is wonderful. Athena not only cares for Sloane, but she makes herself very necessary in many ways, and she even helps run Sloane's charitable foundation, but Sloane slowly begins to deteriorate, a complication Athena explains of her lupus but then time goes by and Sloane instead of getting better and better become sicker and sicker. And her uncertainty quickly turns to paranoia as she begins to suspect that Athena may not be what she seems, does Athena have designs on her husband, or her job, or her entire life,

Kaytee Cobb 11:49

I think Athena might be an unhealthy type two. That's what I've decided. Possibly

Meredith Monday Schwartz 11:53

possibly. So if Liv Constantine sounds familiar to you, you will remember that they are the authors of *The Last Mrs. Parrish*, another one of my favorite popcorn thrillers, and this one is definitely a popcorn thriller. And that's okay, especially if you know that going in, because you can choose it when it's the right fit for you. This was also what I call the perfect one nightstand book, I was looking for something really easy and light. After I finished a very long and heavy buddy read that I was doing, I needed a quick win and a chakra clear and a book that just wasn't going to demand much from me. And that is exactly what I got from this book. Now I say that it is not pejorative at all, as I quite thoroughly enjoyed the roughly two and a half hours that it took me to read this book. It's short, just a hair over 300 pages. And it has super short chapters with rotating points of view. Each chapter rolls right into the next one, just as you want it to with a one nightstand book, you want things fast and easy. And that's what this was. Now, I do find that Liv Constantine's writing is simplistic to a fault at times. And the dialogue can run to the cringy. But not all the time. I tend to ignore it. It's just enough that I notice it if you know what I mean. But what I really like about Liv Constantine's books is the way that they definitely have characters for us to root for they don't only people they're thrillers with horrible baddies and vapid victims. There are two characters in this one that I really, really liked. And I was rooting for all the way through. And these women are smart. They weren't naive, and they didn't give up when things got difficult. They persisted. And I love that about their stories. I want to have someone to root for who isn't also a dimwit, there's no question that I won't remember the details of this book very long after I finish it. But I had fun and I got out of the book hangover that I was in. And that as with a good one, nightstand is sort of the point. This is *The Senator's Wife* by Liv Constantine out May 23.

Kaytee Cobb 14:03

Excellent. Sometimes that's exactly what you need.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 14:06

It was this was perfect the right book at the right time. All right, Kaytee, what's your next one?

Kaytee Cobb 14:10

Okay, my second one this week is called *Dele Weds Destiny* by Tomi Obaro. This is going to be the first time I'm going to mention that a cover tricked me this episode, but it won't be the last. This book as the title I already mentioned *Dele Weds Destiny*, and the cover is striking and beautiful and screamed either romance or rom com to me. It's graphic. It's blue. It has a woman silhouette on the front. Guess what? It's not that and I'm happy to tell you that I am not the only one who was confused by this title and cover combination. But I'll get to that. In *Dele Weds Destiny* we are following three old friends. They met at university in Nigeria decades ago and became friends for life. Here's what the blurb tells us. Funmi is beautiful, brash and determined. Enitan is homely and eager seeking escape from her single mother some mothering a needy love, and Zainab is elegant and reserved, raised by her father's first two wives after her mother's death and childbirth. After becoming soul sisters at university, these friends had ups and downs, they've hurt each other, move far away from each other, misunderstood each other, but endured all the way through. Now, you'll notice that never once in that setup, did I mention anyone named Dele or Destiny. That's because this book is not about a wedding. It's about these friendships. These three friends reunite 30 years later in Lagos, for Funmi's daughter's wedding, the eponymous Destiny, who's marrying her sweetheart, Dele. The novel follows the preparations for the wedding, some rising tensions between the parties, and also spends a lot of time recounting the history of this friend trio. That's what this book is about. Three women who have been friends for 30 years. This is slightly clearer in the UK cover, which has three older women sitting next to each other on the cover. And it's clear with the German title which I had to translate, but means "you will always be my friend". What happened in the US that we called this book *Dele Weds Destiny* and put a single woman's face on the cover? I do not understand. Very confusing, very confusing. Yes, so I have some complicated feelings about this one. And then when Bunmi stopped by my house for a night, she had just finished it on her drive. So we chatted about it before my children stole her away and adopted her as their aunt. Thankfully, she had the same problems with the cover and the title as I did. And we both wanted more info about the wedding, which is squeezed into the very end of the book. The ending is the only part that I really enjoyed of the story. So I get ended up giving it only three stars. Part of that was misplaced expectations. Part of that was the part I really liked was only the very end. So this was *Dele Weds Destiny* by Tomi Obaro, which is not a rom com.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 16:55

There's a lot about that that was confusing, but you know what, you've set a straight and that's the most important thing.

Kaytee Cobb 17:01

This is very important. If you're looking for a book about three friends that had a friendship that endured over 30 years, this might be perfect for you and you would never pick it up. Because that's not what it looks like.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 17:12

Exactly. Exactly. Good. Unearthing the good stuff for us, Kaytee. All right. For my second book, I want to talk about a book that actually is another addition to a series that I have loved and that have brought to the show before. I read *The Twist of a Knife* by Anthony Horowitz. So here's the setup. Author Anthony Horowitz, one of our lead characters and the actual real life author of this book tells his partner in the series that he has done writing these books about detective Hawthorne's life. He has got other things to do. He's written a new play a thriller called *Mind Game* and it's about to open at a theater in London's West End and Anthony Horowitz is nervous. The play is totally panned by the critics. In particular, Sunday Times critic Margaret Throsby gives it a savage review, focusing particularly on how bad the writing is the writing done by Anthony Horowitz. The next day, said critic is stabbed in the heart with an ornamental dagger which turns out to belong to Anthony, and it has his fingerprints all over it. To make matters worse, Anthony is arrested by another detective who carries a grudge from her failure to solve the case described in the second Hawthorne adventure, *The Sentence is Death*. And for that she blames Anthony and now she wants revenge. Thrown into prison and fearing for his life, he realizes that there is only one man that he can call for help... the very man who he gave the heave ho to at the beginning of our story. But will Hawthorne come to his aid? Kaytee, I ask you do you think that Hawthorne is going to come to his aid?

Kaytee Cobb 18:57

Sounds to me like Anthony Horowitz is tired of writing?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 19:01

Actually, this is good news. Like you Kaytee, when I read that setup, I was not super excited about it, didn't sound super fresh. Add that to the fact that I had not loved book three in the series. And I was circumspect going into this book. But I really really love Anthony Horowitz, his writing. I really love his *Magpie Murders* series that he does and the fantastic series on PBS that was done to support that had recently read it. So I was like, You know what, let's just see how we do. This one actually was great. He's back at his hilarious best in this book. I loved the mystery here. It felt so classic from the start. There's lots of fun details and red herrings thrown in for good measure. It was fun to sort it all out in my head and it was a very fast read. Again, here's another book with short chapters and really a well paced story. that just kept my Kindle rolling right along. I started this in the afternoon and finished it right before bed, the perfect read because I needed a win after a few lackluster books that I had set aside. I liked that Horowitz, the author, not the character seemed to be writing while he was just in a good mood, he was playful. He let us play along. He'd put us in a situation where we really needed our leads to talk to a certain character for info, and then maybe that character was not available. But then No, she'd show up and she'd give us all the info we needed. It felt like a fun game that Horowitz was really enjoying playing with his reader. Now this is important because my criticism of Book Three was that it felt like he was tired of writing the series, like all of the sparkle was gone. This book also had a distinctively classic feeling, as I'd mentioned, and I'd several times ruminated that it was like a fun throwback to Agatha Christie. And at the end, we get a jovial wink and nod from the author that that

was exactly what he was trying to do. The plot was great here but what was really so nice to see is the return to the fun back and forth of the H and H relationship. They seem to cross a threshold here and we finally begin to get some backstory on the infamously private detective Daniel Hawthorne. And I am here for more of that. This is *The Twist of a Knife* by the inimitable Anthony Horwitz

Kaytee Cobb 21:29

inimitable. I love that word.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 21:30

I know. I love it.

Kaytee Cobb 21:32

Okay, my third one this week, I got a lot of feels about. This is *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida* by Shehan Karunatilaka. This book takes place in Colombo, Sri Lanka, a place that I have never been and possibly as far as I can recall, never even read about. For anyone who's considering googling right now, Sri Lanka is that teardrop shaped island off the southeastern coast of India. In 1990, we meet Maali Almeida, who is a war photographer. He documents the atrocities of other countries and his own, sometimes breaking news and oftentimes holding their leadership accountable. When we meet him, he's waking up in a sort of celestial visa office, part of the blurb. His physical body has been dismembered and left to sink to the bottom of the lake, and he has no idea who killed him. Maali is given seven moons to attempt to communicate with the living. He uses them to contact the man and woman he loves the most and attempts to lead them to photos that will rock the country to its core. Hopefully solving the mystery of his own murder in the process. This book was so unexpected for me. First off, I want you all to look at the cover... is striking, and graphically beautiful. Which is why I can tell you like a like a demon's face in multi technicolor on the front. Which is why I can tell you that when I saw it as a staff pick at my local indie bookstore Garcia Street Books in Santa Fe, I snagged it after only skimming the cover the blurb on the back. I saw death, murder, gambling, photographs, closet queen got it. I didn't know we were following the afterlife of our title character, or that we had some poltergeist situations happening here. I was also surprised to learn that it won the 2022 Booker Prize, mostly because I don't follow prize lists because they scare me away from books, especially ones like the Booker Prize. This book had some snarky satire to it that kept me turning the pages even when I didn't really understand what was going on. Our author creates a sort of Lincoln in the Bardo like narration by the ghosts that accompany Maali in the afterlife. Concurrently, we are unpeeling layers of his past to figure out who may have wanted to kill him. The list is long. We are also following along with the present investigation in the living world into his disappearance and the discovery of his body and hopefully his photographs. This book has some goryness and plenty of hard including physical violence and trigger warnings around homophobia and sexual violence. But the magical realism of the ghosts interacting with the real world really kept me halfway between horrified and laughing. And I'm really glad I read it. I gave it four stars because as the Booker Prize can attest, sometimes books are just a little too smart for me, and they make me feel like a dumb reader. This one though, was excellent. Kept me laughing the whole way through. While I was also horrified. This is *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida* by Shehan Karunatilaka

Meredith Monday Schwartz 24:29

Any book that can make you laugh while also horrifying you is something that I'm interested in.

Kaytee Cobb 24:36

It's special.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 24:37

All right, well talking about a book that is special. I have one here that totally took me by surprise. And I absolutely loved it. The theme of my books today, by the way, all three of the books that I'm bringing were palate cleansers. So this is my third one on this list. I read *The Original* by Brandon Sanderson and Mary Robinette Kowal.

Kaytee Cobb 24:55

Didn't somebody just tell us to read this and you already devoured it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 24:58

I already devoured it. In fact, I was just gonna tell you, Kaytee, I was going to remind you that we got an email from Emily Basque who said the following. "I have a book that I think will hit a sweet spot for both Kaytee and Meredith. It's *The Original* by Brandon Sanderson and Mary Robinette Kowal. It is a mystery that reveals its world and itself in the most delightful way. It's a bit of a *Rook* vibe at the beginning and then twists to a different vibe completely. But I don't want to spoil anything in this short story. So I will leave it there. She goes on to say it's on Scribd audio. And it's only three and a half hours. Happy reading, Emily Basque". Thank you so much, Emily, you were absolutely right. I agree with you. I think this is definitely was a sweet spot for me. I think it would be fantastic for Kaytee too. Let me give you just a little bit more of the setup. But I agree that the Amazon setup has way too much. So I'm just giving you a little bit more here. In this near future dystopian sci fi, audible original humans have access to an amazing new technology. Injectable nanites now flow through every individual wishing to experience the world through the lens of their own theme. They also keep you healthy, like forever. Now you can still die in this world if you get a mortal injury, like say you get stabbed or shot. But life has made easier in a socially liberated society where automation and income equality have happened for everyone. And so passion pursuits flourish over traditional work. Now that's an area of the book that is very interesting when you hear some of the things that people are able to do with their time now that they don't have to worry about working. It's very interesting. The whole world building, in fact, is done absolutely expertly very, very quickly. And it's fascinating. As our story starts our lead character Holly Winseed wakes up in a hospital room, her memory compromised and a new identity given to her. She's also surrounded by a team of government agents who waste no time and telling her what is at stake. You see her original has killed their husband and new Holly now has one week to hunt down her original and kill her for the murder. If she succeeds, she'll assume the original's place in society. If she fails, they both die. With her newly implanted and very badass combat and deduction skills, Holly fends off both attacks by terrorists and doubts about her own trustworthiness as clues lead her to her original and the truth about the world that they live in. All right, this was wonderful. This was exactly what I needed on audio. I got into it within minutes of getting that email from Emily at 1.3, which is the speed that I listened to audio. It was perfect for just two full workouts and the perfect palate cleanser between heavier audiobooks. I'll say that this was narrated by Julia Whalen my second in his many months, and it was done very well. Of course, I think she might be growing on me, there was lots of action. And I

really want to underscore this because we always want to make sure you guys know the mood you should be in when you pick something up. This is perfect for car rides with husbands and teens. It's very slickly produced and sometimes feels more like you're listening to a movie than a book. And I think that encapsulates what I want to say about The Original. This is much more like an action movie experience. It's action with intelligence. And it had me considering lots of big questions to be sure what I like a world where I could put on a theme that had me sitting in the middle of a fairy forest, or would it all feel so fake that existence is no longer worth the effort, big questions, lots of heart pounding scenes, and a nice resolution. I'm so glad that Emily reached out with this press. It was a very good one. This is The Original by Brandon Sanderson and Mary Robinette Kowal.

Kaytee Cobb 29:02

It does sound very good. And I feel like I'm going to have to think of like when is the perfect time to put this on in the car?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 29:10

Yes, it's very like an action movie but would be totally okay for like a you know, 10, 11, 12 and up kind of crowd.

Kaytee Cobb 29:18

Okay, perfect. I like it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 29:20

Alright, so we are going to talk in our deep dive about a topic that I don't think we've ever discussed on currently reading and that is publishing houses. Now. A lot of people pay attention to the publishing house that there but like for example, one of the columns on our book journal is that we can keep track of the publishing house. Now I'm going to tell you before this deep dive, that was one of the old columns I had hidden.

Kaytee Cobb 29:48

Well, that's fine, right?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 29:50

But now that I've done this deep dive, I unhid it and going forward I am going to be keeping track because Kaytee did you like I find that there are really some publishing houses that are sweet spots for reading?

Kaytee Cobb 30:04

I found a few things. First, I tried to brainstorm like, okay, Kaytee off the top of your head, can you think of some places that are publishers that you tend to enjoy their books? And I was like, Yeah, Flatiron, Riverhead, Tor right? Atria books for kids books I love Balzer and Bray. And because I've been keeping track of that over the past few years, it was just like stuff that rose to the top off the top of my head. What I was surprised about in this deep dive is that, really, there were only five. And these are all imprints of publishing houses. But all these places that I would like, Oh, they're so fun and unique and

interesting. If they're just owned by Penguin Random House, or Macmillan, or Hachette, or, like there's nothing new happening.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 30:04

Right. Yeah, this is one of the things that I found out and I was thinking, okay, so when you enter that, say, on your yearbook spreadsheet, do you enter the imprint or the larger publishing house? Okay, because it's the imprint that really matters, right? Because I feel like it does. Yeah, I mean, the imprints are doing specific things. And that's the result we're looking for here is not to have a guide to the corporate structure of publishing in the world today. But we're trying to figure out if you pay attention to things it like, if I pick up a book, and Flatiron is the publisher, I oftentimes will be like, oh, you know what, this is more likely to be a win for me. Because I have that experience with them. So the imprint is what you're keeping track of.

Kaytee Cobb 31:32

That is what I track in my book journal, I just was surprised to figure out that those imprints, those many, many imprints were owned by so few parent companies, right. That was weird for me. And you know, the the time that I really started paying attention for the first time to publishing houses was when we started the Indie Press List Meredith, because we do try to include the publisher, every time we talk about the five books that this bookstore has provided for us. And I started to notice regularly, the ones that I had gotten so drawn into before we recorded the episode, and had already made a note of the publisher or the imprint, which is the actual word that I'm looking for when I say publisher, every time and I started to notice patterns that way. Even though I log it in my book journal, I never really paid attention to it. Because it didn't matter that much. To me, I was like, I liked that book, or I didn't, it doesn't matter who put it out into the world.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 32:26

Unless, like our good friend Sarah Dickinson from Sara's Bookshelves Live as let us know, it actually can be a way for you to increase your overall rating on your books. By choosing books from a certain imprint, there's a lot to be said for how those books might work well within your reading life, if if several of them have already worked. So like I said, I am going to be paying attention to that and entering it on my book journal going forward, what I decided to do just to kind of get my feet under me here, because I hadn't been paying much attention to this when I went back through 2022 2021 and 2020. And I grabbed my top 10 books from each of those years, and went through and figured out the publisher or the imprint from each of those. And that gave me a sense of First of all, this is not going to surprise anybody. But I do tend to read more commercially, I read a lot from the big publishing houses, right? That's the second surprise anyone about my reading, but also there were a couple like Minotaur books, who happens to publish Louise Penny, and a lot of other especially mysteries and thrillers because that's what that imprint concentrates on was one of my biggest wins. And so I automatically on my NetGalley started following them as a favorite publisher. And so that's one way that this has translated for me is I started following a few publishers that I wasn't really following before thinking oh, maybe some of the early releases that are coming or the the releases that are coming down the road from them might be a good fit for me to bring to the show.

Kaytee Cobb 33:57

And that's one of the ways that you can get not necessarily higher quality NetGalley reads, although that could be the end goal, or the end result. But also ones that are a better fit for you because I know probably within the the last six months, Meredith, we had a whole like come to Jesus moment about your NetGalley usage and approval rating.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 34:18

Right, right, which I have not changed at all. And I've continued all of my bad habits and still have a 26% rating,

Kaytee Cobb 34:26

apparently doesn't matter because you're still bringing us great books on the show. But now you're gonna have a better radar for the publishers that usually work for you. So hopefully those ones will rise to the top of your list more often. So you will request them more often. So you will get books that are actually a better fit for you more often because what happens is you get approved by a publisher and maybe they put you on auto approval. So then you just start getting all these books from somebody that you don't really like that much right, not somebody someplace.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 34:58

So this actually in a category of something that really worked for me was Blackstone publishing ended up making me auto approved so any of their galleries on Net Galley I can get automatically which was fantastic because they put out Catherine Ryan Howard, who of course you guys know that I absolutely love her and lots of other of my favorite mysteries and thriller authors come out under the Blackstone publishing imprint and so they have done Kristen Hannah. They've done Kate Quinn. They've done Kazuo Ishiguro they've done Steven Rowley, The Guncle came out through Blackstone publishing. So lots of really, really good authors underneath that publishing house. And so I'm very happy for my auto approval there. Now what I will say is another publisher, that's a really big hit for me, that I cannot for the life of me get approved for most of the time is Riverhead interesting, I don't know why. Well, I mean, I do know why I have a terrible completion percentage. I mean, I know exactly why part of it. Yes.

Kaytee Cobb 36:03

Yeah, that's part of it. I want to go a little higher level here. So when we say publishing houses, there are five. The Big Five is what they're called five main publishing houses. Those are Penguin Random House, Macmillan, Simon and Schuster, Hachette and HarperCollins. Collectively, those five publishing houses own over 500 Publishing imprints, and Bunmi has let us know on Trope Thursdays that some imprints will only put forth maybe six books a year, or 12 books a year, or 20 books a year. So it's not like there's 500 imprints and all of them release 1000 titles a year and you could never read all of them, you can really hone in on an imprint that works for you. And you might be able to read everything they release in a given year, without even saying and that was everything I read for the whole year, which is why it's useful to figure out which imprints work for you because that imprint is going to have its own acquiring editors, it's going to have its own kind of niche that it's curating. And as I went through and looked at different types of books, I noticed that some really love to court books and translation or international authors, some really love mysteries and thrillers. When I think of my romance reading, it's almost always St. Martin's or Berkley. That's where they come from. Even though Harlequin used to be

the big publishing imprint. Now it's been subsumed by HarperCollins. And it's still publishing books, but it's not putting forth the ones that are big hits for me as a reader. So it was really interesting to pull that apart and say, okay, they might all be five big companies. And there might be nothing new under the sun. But really, it does help to know that imprint in order to find the taste that matches yours, and the editors that match your style. And the writers that match your style, because they do each curate their own personality, almost. And it comes through even on the spine of the book.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:05

Absolutely right. And so to go back then to Riverhead, who will not auto approve me for, for almost anything, they are very literary. And they have a great concentration on diverse authors and they just have a really firm and well guided hand as to the books that they choose. If I see the Riverhead as the publisher and a book that I'm looking for in a bookstore where they will let me have it if I pay them cash dollars, I will almost always pick it up because it's going to be a really high quality literary novel.

Kaytee Cobb 38:37

Yeah, and it's gonna have some of that depth to it that you might not get in your popcorn thriller. That was a great palate cleanser, but isn't what you're looking for at that exact time. Right?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:47

Exactly. total opposite of that. Of course the other publishing house that pops up in my head immediately from my reading and Kaytee for your reading too is the beloved Tor, they Tor Books, Tor teen Tor kids, they are doing amazing work, especially in the fantasy and sci fi genres. I love the way that they publish books, as if it's a bunch of readers publishing books, not necessarily a corporate entity making decisions about what they think is going to sell. A great example of this is Legends and Lattes. It was initially self published. It started to grab hold was this fantastic book and Tor courted the author Travis Baldree and just said, You know what, we want you under our imprint, and we're not going to try to change what you're doing. We're not going to try to rebrand you, we are really just going to support what it is that you're doing because you're doing it really well. And from what he told me about working with them, it seems that that is their entire ethos of working with authors. Just let's put out really good books, even if it's not necessarily what everyone has seen before or what we think they want. They really it's like a bookstore when you go in and you know that the people who work there are real readers. There's a different feel to it.

Kaytee Cobb 40:00

Definitely yes. And I, gosh, I love Tor and and they have even imprints within Tor so they have Tor, like you mentioned Tor kids tor.com is its own little mini imprint. And that one put forth stuff like Becky Chambers Psalm For the Wild Built and some little sci fi novellas that really just hit that sweet spot. But who knew that they would be these like juggernaut sales things. What I've learned through this week's deep dive and research is that getting published through an imprint that is with or within one of the big five publishing houses, what that really means for authors is then they have marketing dollars, then they have a big publisher behind their publication that will make sure the right readers are getting that book in their hands. So they will send out galleys, they will contact podcasters. Gosh, how many emails do we get a weak Meredith. And those people are hired by the big houses that are trying to make sure each of their imprints and each of their authors in those imprints is finding the right audience. And that's

why there's a benefit to publishing within one of these big publishing houses. If you go with an independent publishing house that's outside of one of these big five, you're not going to have those marketing dollars behind you as an author. And it may mean that your precious baby dolly that you've like, worked so so so hard on doesn't find that audience that you were hoping that it would, even though it feels like well, we should diversify for publishing, and we should make sure everybody gets those dollars. Having these big authors, and small authors all in single places means that we get to spread the wealth. And all of them get that like boost in sales and marketing and visibility,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 41:48

right. So it makes sense for us to pay attention as book buyers. And it makes sense for us to pay attention as readers as far as which publishing imprints might be a good fit for you. And again, I'm gonna encourage everybody to do what I did. And if you're not already keeping track of that, it's totally available on the Amazon listing, it's really easy to find the imprint. So add that is a quick two second thing that you add to your book journal, and it might steer you in the right direction for some books that you wouldn't have found otherwise.

Kaytee Cobb 42:17

Definitely. Yeah, I think that's a great reader know thyself. And thy imprint, right. Exactly,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 42:23

exactly. All right, Kaytee, let's make some wishes at the fountain. What's your wish this week?

Kaytee Cobb 42:29

Okay, for my wish this week, I am circling back. So in case you were listening, and you already forgot what we talked about, I wish to make sure you all are following @ezeekat on Instagram. I should just assume everybody is already following Jason. But if you're not allow me to improve your life. Jason Headley is unabashedly nerdy and joyful and bookish and creative. I follow and giggle at every single thing he posts even if he doesn't talk me into a book because his tastes run decidedly sci fi, fantasy and manga, his enthusiasm for life makes my day brighter. He and I would, I'm sure be great friends. Because we could talk Lego and fantasy and Disney obsessions. We could nerd out about having too many books and buying more copies just because they're pretty. And we could traipse around bookstores and Disneyland together for funsies. So since I'm not actually friends with him, I'm following up on what Meredith said earlier, which is, if you don't want to tag us in his posts, and make sure he knows about us, remind him that we would love to hear from him on currently reading, but mostly go follow him for some bookish sparkle and joy in your lives. And in your Instagram feed. @ezeekat on Instagram. That's your assignment, go do it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:43

Absolutely. It's at @ezeekat. And interestingly, he just made the transition to full time content producer. And so that's a really big and really brave move to make. He certainly has done the work to build up the following. So we wish him the very best luck doing that. So let's all support him as much as we can. All right, Kaytee, from a conversation that you and I were having actually offline, just between our own selves last week, I want to wish that everyone if you did not read Bird Box by Josh Malerman in 2014. I just want to encourage you, this is a great summer read. This is kind of like a plague book. But in the

most terrifying way possible. You know, this is the book where the very beginning life's going on normal. And then all of a sudden, people start randomly killing themselves in the streets because they are seeing something and what we quickly find out is you need to blindfold yourself you need to not be outside because that is the monster of this particular book. So we follow a group of survivors who have to be inside all the time. They cannot look outside in any way shape, or form. If they go outside to get any sort of supplies or anything they have to be blindfolded, and we follow Mallory and her two children as they tried to get themselves to safety in this book. It is scary. It is interesting. It is propulsive. It is so, so great as a book first and foremost, you have to you have to read the book. If you read the book, then you have to watch the movie this Kaytee is what we were talking about. I recently somehow Jackson brought it up and he was like, didn't you read didn't, haven't you read book because he was remembering me reading Daphne by Josh Malerman recently. And I was saying, oh, yeah, Bird Box we should watch that movie. So we watched it. And the three of us really enjoyed it. Johnny and I both read the book, but we had not seen the movie. It is not very similar to the book, but it is its own thing. And it is also really, really good. Really well done. The tension is ratcheted way, way up. And I like Sandra Bullock in that role. She does a really nice job there. So that was a fun kind of late Friday night, shorts family activity that we just did. So highly recommend Bird Box by Josh Malerman, and the movie, so that's my wish that if you're looking for something creepy that you go there,

Kaytee Cobb 46:02

that is a great wish I will cosign on both of those. I loved Bird Box the book, and when Jason and I watched the movie together, we both enjoyed it immensely.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:13

Well, you know, as you and Shad get ready to do Popcorn in the Pages, I am really pulling for you guys at some point to do Bird Box because I think that would be a really fun Popcorn in the Pages for you. But you guys will make that decision as you go through your roster.

Kaytee Cobb 46:26

We're going to tackle every genre on that show. I was so excited about it. Shad is hilarious. I think y'all are gonna love this show.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:33

I can't wait for Popcorn in the Pages. That's gonna be so good. All right, that is it for this week. As reminder, here's where you can connect with us. You can find me on Meredith at @Meredith.reads on Instagram.

Kaytee Cobb 46:44

And you can find me Kaytee at @notesonbookmarks on Instagram,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:47

full show notes with the title of every book we mentioned in the episode and timestamps, so you can zoom right to where we talked about it can be found in our website at currentlyreadingpodcast.com.

Kaytee Cobb 46:57

You can also follow the show at @currentlyreadingpodcast on Instagram or email us at currentlyreadingpodcast@gmail.com

Meredith Monday Schwartz 47:04

And if you want more of this content, become a bookish friend follow us on Patreon for \$5 a month. It keeps the show show ad free and you get so much more bookish content from Kaytee and me. You can also rate and review us on Apple podcasts and shout us out on social media. All of those things really help us to find our perfect audience.

Kaytee Cobb 47:24

Yes, bookish friends are the best friends. Thank you all for helping us grow and get closer to our goals.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 47:29

Alright, until next week, may your coffee be hot

Kaytee Cobb 47:32

and your book be unputdownable.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 47:34

Happy reading Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 47:35

Happy reading Meredith.