## Wisconsin Public Radio - Larry Meiller Show
**Daniel's favorites and other year-end trends - December 15, 2022**

| Fiction - word of mouth buzz | **Lessons in Chemistry, by Bonnie Garmus.** This is a debut novel from a writer in her fifties. It's about a chemist in the 1950s and '60s whose career runs into roadblocks at every turn, due to the sexism of the times. It's funny (think *Where'd You Go Bernadette*) and is probably the best word of mouth of any fiction this year. |
| Fiction - one of Daniels' top books of the year | **Last Summer on State Street, by Toya Wolfe.** Set in the 1990s, this is about four young women living in the Robert Taylor Homes of Chicago, trying to survive while everything is falling apart around them, avoiding gangs and drugs and violence. Beautifully written - like reading a fictional Alex Kotlowitz book. |
| Fiction - award winner, one of Daniel's top books | **The Sleeping Car Porter, by Suzeette Mayr.** A historical novel about a Black and closeted gay railway porter in 1920s, with most of the story taking place on a trans-Canadian trip, and his interactions with the bosses, the other porters, and passengers. His dream is to raise enough money to go to dental school. He loves teeth! The book won the Giller Prize one of the biggest prizes in Canada. |
| Fiction - epic novel | **The Whalebone Theatre, by Joanna Quinn.** Three kids growing up on a British country estate get the idea of forming a community theater. Their obsession with acting carries into adulthood with two of them becoming spies. It's an old-fashioned epic novel with contemporary sensibilities - a bit Masterpiece Theater-y. A New York Times notable book for 2022. A bit slow to start but ultimately rewarding. And very nice paper quality! |
| Children's picture book | **Farmhouse, by Sophie Blackall.** This beautiful picture book from a two-time Caldecott winner follows the lives of a family (12 kids) through their daily lives, with Blackall imagining the history of a ruin near her home. This book will make you cry! |
| Music history - one of Daniel's top books | **The Number Ones, by Tom Breihan.** Music books are published heavily in the fourth quarter and this year, there's a lot of pop music books that are a combination of history and criticism, including one from Bob Dylan. But my favorite is *The Number Ones*, which grew out of a column in a we magazine called Stereogum. This is one of my favorite books of the year. If you like the music, you will be fascinated. If you don't know it, the book is an interesting cultural history and the web makes it super easy to hear the songs. |
Memoir - best-of lists

**Stay True, by Hua Shu.** This memoir from a New Yorker writer, about a special friendship formed in college that ended too soon, is in the spirit of *Truth and Beauty*. It is also a meditation on Asian American identity, and it made at least two year-end best-of lists, The New York Times and The Washington Post.

Fiction/apocalyptic - one of Daniel's top books

**Lark Ascending, a novel by Silas House.** The journey of an American family of refugees to the safe haven of Ireland. It's rare to find a book that combines the literary traditions of Appalachia and Ireland, but this is it. It's a post-apocalyptic story with a strong dog character, but it's quiet and hopeful. A great book to read after Station Eleven.

Kids oversized reference books

**The Secret World of Plants: Tales of More than 100 Remarkable Flowers, Trees, and Seeds, by Ben Hoare.** A full-color oversized book for kids eight and up through adults, about all kinds of plants from phytoplankton to sequoias.

Romance

**Once Upon a December, by Amy E. Reichert.** This is a romance set in Milwaukee with little speculative element. Julemarked is an enchanted holiday market that appears as an annex to traditional markets around the world, simultaneously. A librarian named Astra catches the attention of Jack, who works in the kringle shop.

Fantasy

**Legends and Lattes, by Travis Baldree.** An epic fantasy warrior retires and opens a coffee shop. This is fueling the rise of cozy fantasy. Like Shady Hollow, this book was originally self-published and is now a national bestseller. Perfect for fans of Terry Pratchett's Discworld.

Romantic comedy/teaser for post-Christmas

**Ms. Demeanor, by Elinor Lipman.** I love novels about food (Marrying the Ketchups and Search from the spring) and this one is a doozy. A lawyer under house arrest (for a fling on the apartment roof, spotted by a neighbor) starts a TikTok series where she monologues while making food from very old-fashioned cookbooks. It's a parlor comedy, a romance, and a COVID novel without ever mentioning the word COVID (as anyone who was stuck in an apartment for months will tell you). On sale 12/27/22!
Great Short Books: A Year of Reading Briefly, by Kenneth C. Davis. Almost every year somebody puts together a reading list in book form. I remember 1,000 Books to Read Before You Die - intimidating. But Davis's book is less intimidating because the books are short! From Lord of the Flies to The House on Mango Street, these crowd pleasers are almost all under 200 pages. And that's great for the book club who can't get folks to finish the book or people like me who count the number of books they read each year!

Hollywood: The Oral History, by Jeanine Basinger and Sam Wasson. Based on unprecedented access to the Harold Lloyd Archives at the American Film Institute, this lively history based on interviews ranging from Steven Spielberg to Jane Fonda to Jordan Peele is compulsively browsable, or if you're like me, you'll read it cover to cover.

The Ingenue, by Rachel Kapelke-Dale. Saskia, a former piano prodigy turned test prep clerk returns home to Milwaukee for her mother's funeral only to find that the family manse (it's based on a real one on Lake Drive) was left to her mother's colleague, with whom Saskia has a troubled (and secret) past. What's going on? You'd probably classify this as psychological suspense, but it's almost more like classic gothic.

Shady Hollow, Cold Clay, Mirror Lake, by Juneau Black. These three cozy murder mysteries featuring anthromorphic animalas, most notably a fox reporter and a raven bookseller, were originally self-published, but after getting reissued by Vintage Books, they became national bestsellers. #4 comes out next fall.

All This Could Be Different, by Sarah Thankam Mathews. This novel about a young woman struggling to become an adult in Milwaukee is my only carry-over from the spring list. She went to school in Madison and lived in Milwaukee after graduation. Her novel was shortlisted for the National Book Award and just made the Vulture/New York Magazine ten-best books of 2022 list.

Signal Fires, by Dani Shapiro. I love books about connection and Shapiro, the author of Inheritance (a memoir of finding you are not who you think you are) is just that. Two families in suburban Connecticut are bound together by a tragedy (a car accident that leaves one girl dead), but over the years, they find out that the secret they keep together causes almost as much harm.
**Fiction - short novels**

**The Hero of This Book, by Elizabeth McCracken.** A novelist retraces the steps of a trip she and her mother took to London after her mother’s death in what we are told is absolutely not a memoir. I was going to mention Elizabeth Strout's Lucy by the Sea, but I figure that Elizabeth Strout fans need to know about another, lesser-known writer, who has written a very Elizabeth-Stroutian novel.

**Memoir - word of mouth bestseller**

**I'm Glad My Mom Died, by Jennette McCurdy.** I don't want to make a judgment of listenership, but I’m guessing many of you didn't know who McCurdy was - the answer is, the costar of the Nickelodeon series iCarly and Sam and Cat. But not only did McCurdy not want to be a television star, she had a stage mother whose behavior crossed over into abuse. A breakout memoir of the year, that if Boswell is a guide, is selling as well at indies as through other channels (as opposed to Matthew Perry, which isn't working for us - I don't know why).