

People & Places

Books

Reid soars with 'Rising'

'The Other Black Girl' bold, poignant novel

By Alicia Rancilio

'The Other Black Girl,' by Zakiya Dalila Harris (Atria)

Congratulations are in order for debut novelist **Zakiya Dalila Harris**. Her first book "The Other Black Girl," is one of the most highly-anticipated novels of the summer, if not the year, and it lives up to the hype.

An intriguing mash-up of mystery, thriller, sci-fi and social commentary, "The Other Black Girl" is set inside Wagner Books, a publishing company where Nella Rogers is an editorial assistant and the only Black girl in the office. That is, until she spots a new hire name Hazel-May McCall, who is also Black. Nella feels instantly hopeful that Hazel will be a much-needed friend and comrade who will shoulder some of the Black representation in the workplace.

As someone who has felt obliged to fit into the white mold during her time at Wagner, Hazel is a breath of fresh air. Hazel encourages Nella to speak up when she recognizes a troubling depiction of race in a popular novelist's writing.

But, as much as of an ally as Hazel claims to be, she says one thing to Nella but does another. She quickly wins friends and opportunities at work, leaving Nella feeling more alienated than ever.

At the same time, Nella begins receiving anonymous, threatening notes telling her to leave the company. Nella immediately suspects Hazel. Suddenly the other Black girl in the office may not be her friend but her foe.

Dalila Harris' book peels back the curtain on recent efforts of corporate America to embrace diversity, but also shows the weaknesses behind its intentions. It's a sharp, surprising, original work by an author with a long future ahead of her.

"The Other Black Girl" is also in development as a series at Hulu with Dalila Harris on board to co-write and executive produce.

'Malibu Rising,' by Taylor Jenkins Reid (Ballantine Books)

Taylor Jenkins Reid is not afraid to challenge herself with her writing.

In 2015's "Maybe in Another Life," she wrote about two parallel universes, documenting the resulting path of a character's choice in alternating chapters. In 2018's "The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo," she created an aging movie star, Evelyn Hugo, who after rising to fame during the days of the old studio system and famously married seven times wants to finally tell her story, mysteriously choosing an up-and-coming journalist to be the conduit. And in 2019's "Daisy Jones & The Six" she revisited the formation and abrupt breakup of a 1970's rock band, with its members, loved ones and friends sharing their version of events in first-person.

In her new book, "Malibu Rising," Reid takes us to the beaches of Malibu in 1983. We meet the famed Riva siblings, the (neglected) children of crooner **Mick Riva**. Born and raised in the area, they're all water babies who love to surf. The eldest is Nina, who has gone pro, and is also a famous model. She has assumed the matriarch role to her three siblings, **Jay, Hud** and **Kit**, after the death of their mother.

Every year, Nina throws an end of summer bash that is a who's who of **Hollywood** where anything can happen (and often does.) "Malibu Rising" takes you inside the Riva family for the final party at the property where relationships are formed, ended, rekindled and major life choices are made. At the end of the night, the house literally goes up in flames.

Reid has documented on her social media that she dove into the surf culture and history of Malibu for the book with its laid back, easy living sun-soaked vibe. After a year where most people stayed home, it's a great time to escape to the beach, even if only through Reid's writing.

'Devil May Dance,' by Jake Tapper (Little, Brown)

As **Jake Tapper's** new thriller, "The Devil May Dance," opens in the year 1960, New York Republican Congressman **Charlie Marder** is being extorted by none other than the US attorney general.

Robert Kennedy is concerned that his brother, President **John F. Kennedy**, likes to pal around with **Frank Sinatra**, who in turn likes to pal around with mobsters. Fearing scandal, Robert Kennedy wants Marder to discreetly investigate Sinatra's mob connections. To persuade him, he has the congressman's father imprisoned on trumped up charges and won't release him unless Marder cooperates.

Why Robert Kennedy would want a congressman to play detective when he could hire a real one remains a mystery. Readers may also wonder why the attorney general fails to realize that that extorting a congressman from the opposing political party risks scandal as well.

Nevertheless, Marder and his feisty wife Margaret resolutely travel to Hollywood to ingratiate themselves with the Sinatra and his Rat Pack.

Nine pages of source material cited in the back of the book indicate that Tapper, best known as a CNN anchor, researched 1960s Hollywood to give the tale an air of authenticity. It didn't, although it did result in a blizzard of name dropping.

When the Marders arrive in Hollywood, they encounter nearly everybody who matters from **Sammy Davis Jr** and **John Wayne** to **Alfred Hitchcock** and **Marilyn Monroe**. They also fall into a sewer of drunken parties, drug use, prostitution, pedophilia, blackmail, police corruption, backstabbing, organized crime, and murder.

Except for the Marders and actress **Janet Leigh**, Tapper puts the stink of the place on nearly every character to such a degree that it's difficult to care what happens to any of them. Meanwhile, the prose rarely rises above graceless and the plot is so far-fetched and convoluted that it is difficult to follow. (AP)



Nicola Coughlan poses for photographers upon arrival for the British Academy Television Awards in London, June 6. (AP)



Hayley Squires poses for photographers. (AP)



Rose Matafeo poses for photographers upon arrival for the British Academy Television Awards. (AP)



Billie Piper poses for photographers upon arrival for the British Academy Television Awards. (AP)



Dissident Chinese artist Ai Weiwei poses by one of his latest works, a giant toilet paper roll in marble, during a press preview of his new exhibition "Rapture" in Lisbon, June 3. (AP)

Variety

LOS ANGELES: Clarence Williams III, who played the cool undercover cop Linc Hayes on the counterculture series "The Mod Squad" and Prince's father in "Purple Rain," has died. He was 81.

Williams died Friday at his home in Los Angeles after a battle with colon cancer, his manager **Allan Mindel** said Sunday. Tributes came quickly on social media from both those who worked with Williams and those who admired him for his trailblazing roles and impactful performances. "Tales from the Hood" director **Rusty Cundieff**



Olly Alexander performs prior to the British Academy Television Awards in London, June 6. (AP)



Jordan Banjo, (left), and Ashley Banjo pose with their Most See Moment award in 'Britain's Got Talent.' (AP)



Rakie Ayola poses for photographers with her Best Supporting Actress award for her role in 'Anthony.' (AP)



Paul Mescal poses for photographers with his Leading Actor award for his role in 'Normal People.' (AP)



Aimee Lou Wood poses with her Best Female Performance for a Comedy Programme award for her role in 'Sex Education.' (AP)



Romesh Ranganathan poses with his Entertainment Performance award for the 'The Ranganation.' (AP)



Jessica Plummer poses for photographers upon arrival for the British Academy Television Awards. (AP)



Zawe Ashton poses for photographers upon arrival for the British Academy Television Awards. (AP)



Gbemisola Ikumelo poses for photographers upon arrival for the British Academy Television Awards. (AP)

Art

'Rapture' includes artist's iconic works

Ai picks Portugal for new show, home

LISBON, Portugal, June 7, (AP): Dissident Chinese artist Ai Weiwei is putting on the biggest show of his career, and he is doing it in a place he's fallen in love with: Portugal.

The world-renowned visual artist's new exhibition, "Rapture," opened in the Portuguese capital Lisbon last Friday.

Ai arrived in Portugal almost two years ago and says he has no plans to return to Germany or England, where he has also lived since leaving China in 2015.

"I have a great feeling" about Portugal, the artist said Thursday. "This is a place I'm staying."

Ai's show in São Paulo in 2018 covered twice the area of the Lisbon exhibit but had fewer works on display.

"Rapture" is being presented in a long, low, riverside building that housed Portugal's national rope factory starting in the 18th century and now hosts temporary art exhibitions. Ai's show runs until Nov. 28.

The 85 pieces include some of Ai's iconic works, as well as new ones produced exclusively in Portugal.

"Forever Bicycles," from 2015, a giant sculpture using 960 stainless steel bicycles as building blocks, stands at the entrance to the building. Ai's

16-meter-long (52-foot-long) black inflatable boat with human figures, which alludes to the migration crisis, is also in Lisbon, as are some other of his well-known installations, sculptures, videos and photographs.

Ai notes, however, that most of the works "have never met each other" and are appearing in the same place for the first time.

Ai was arrested at Beijing's airport in April 2011 and held for 81 days without explanation during a wider crackdown on dissent. He moved to Europe after Chinese authorities returned his passport.

tweeted that his sadness over Williams' passing, "cannot be overstated. His artistry and sheer coolness was extraordinary." (AP)

NEW YORK: Richard Robinson, who as the longtime head of Scholastic Inc shaped the reading habits of millions of young readers through such bestsellers as **J.K. Rowling's** "Harry Potter" novels and through a wide range of educational



Williams III



Robinson

materials, reading clubs and book fairs, has died. He was 84.

The children's publishing giant announced that Robinson died Saturday, but did not immediately provide a cause. He had been in excellent health, according to the publisher.

"We are deeply saddened by the sudden passing of Dick Robinson," Scholastic's board of directors said in a statement. (AP)