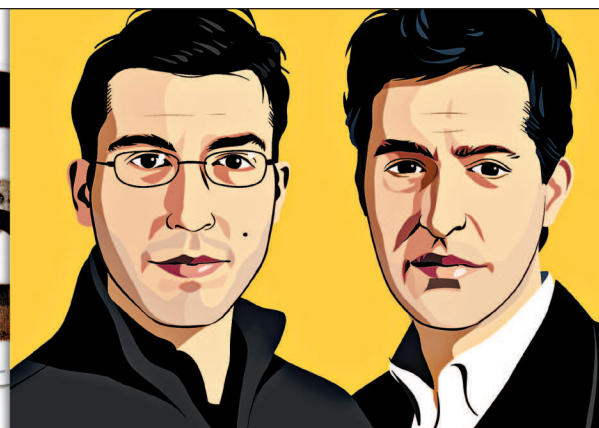


**Jonathan Safran Foer and
Nathan Englander**
reinterpret the Haggadah



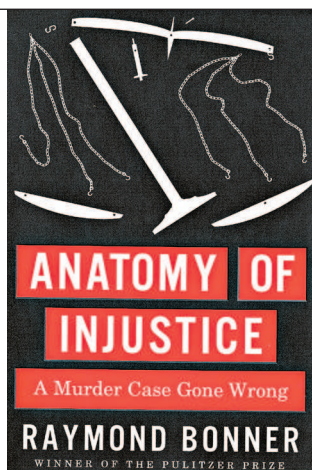
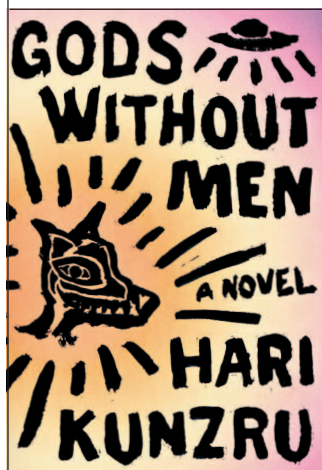
THE JOURNAL

PRINTERS

MICHAEL ERARD ON FIVE BABBLING GENIUSES



Look at
pretty pictures!
Photo books proliferate



ROW

Chicago Tribune
MARCH 18,
2012

"Will lift readers off their feet and bear them along on its eloquent tide."
—Emma Donoghue, author of *Room*

carry
the
one

A Novel

Carol Anshaw

FICTION

In this week's booklet

Modern
Medicine

BY KODI SCHEER

Frank Langella
drops names



LITERARY SALOON

RICK KOGAN

Catalyst for collaboration

Two former radio producers brainstorm a Chicago novel

There has not been a book published — or likely to be published in the future — that contains jacket quotes from the pair of aging, pretty good golfers named Rick Kogan and William L. Petersen. But there we are, myself and the great stage actor and television (“CSI”) star, offering praise for the novel “The Living Wills.”

I say, in part, “Rollicking and real on so many levels.” Billy says, in part, “A hell of an old-fashioned read.”

The book is the collaborative effort between Rick Kaempfer and Brendan Sullivan. I have known them both for a long time, and Petersen is related by marriage to Sullivan.

“We wanted blurbs from people we respected and more importantly knew,” says Sullivan.

He and Kaempfer have known one another for decades, since both were young producers working for some of the biggest stars in local radio.

From the later 1980s until 2003, Kaempfer was a producer for the Steve Dahl and Garry Meier show and later for John Landecker. Since then he has been a full-time writer and a prolific one, writing for a number of online sites of his creation, including Chicago Radio Spotlight (chicagoradiospotlight.blogspot.com), a series of interviews with local radiofolk (myself included), and Just One Bad Century, which is comprised of a website (justonebadcentury.com) and blog (justonebadcentury.blogspot.com) devoted to the history of the Chicago Cubs. He contributes pieces to Shore magazine and The Beachwood Reporter. He also published two books, 2004’s “The Radio Producer’s Handbook,” co-written with John Swanson, and a novel, “\$everance,” in 2007. He lives in Mt. Prospect

with his wife, Bridget, and their three sons.

For more than a decade, Sullivan was the creative producer for Jonathon Brandmeier. He has also done some acting and appeared in TV commercials and worked in advertising sales. Since 2001, Sullivan has run his own company, Corporate Creativity Coach (creativity-coach.net), that helps organizations, as he says, “create more innovative solutions, more successful creative ideas, and a healthier, more collaborative work environment where talented people can flourish.” He has worked for such clients as Kellogg’s, Harley-Davidson, Sara Lee, PepsiCo and Marriott Hotels and Resorts. He lives with his wife, Susan, and their four children in Chicago.

“I really liked Rick’s novel and I like him,” says Sullivan. “I began to wonder if some of the techniques I use in my corporate work — improv, brainstorming — might help create a novel.”

And so he approached Kaempfer. “I really do enjoy sitting in my basement, leading the solitary writer’s life,” he says. “But radio is a very collaborative medium, and Brendan and I get along really well. ... So I thought, ‘What the heck?’ and we started this experiment.”

They began in January 2009, talking on the phone and e-mailing. Eventually they started meeting at the Catalyst Ranch, a most remarkable meeting/event space in the



Terrence Antonio James/Tribune photo

“

I began to wonder if some of the techniques I use in my corporate work — improv, brainstorming — might help create a novel.

— Brendan Sullivan, above right, with Rick Kaempfer

”

‘Starters’ is dystopian sci-fi at its best

BY SUSAN CARPENTER

It has often been said that youth is wasted on the young. In “Starters,” the outstanding young-adult novel from debut author Lissa Price, that premise is pushed to an apocryphal limit that’s only possible in sci-fi, as wealthy geriatrics rent the bodies of nubile teens.

In this clever and creepy tale with faint echoes of “The Stepford Wives” and “The Hunger Games,” 16-year-old Callie Woodland is desperate. She and her 7-year-old brother, Tyler, along with quasi-love interest Michael, have been squatting in a vacant apartment, having lost their parents a year earlier to the Spore Wars. Callie’s brother is ill, but she doesn’t have the funds to take care of him, so she does what many teens with strong family values would do. She investigates ways to provide.

Unfortunately, there aren’t that many options in a dystopian society with such lopsided wealth. Teens have been forbidden from work and are so poor they’re forced to steal, whereas the so-called Enders, most of whom are more than 100, have guaranteed employment, live in mansions and indulge in plastic surgery. For Callie, the best option to help her family is Prime Destinations in Beverly Hills — a body bank that pairs moneyed Enders with good-looking teens who are willing to rent their bodies by the day, week or month. Callie could earn enough money to buy a house and feed her family for a year simply by renting her body three times.

When Callie signs the contract to rent herself, she’s immediately stripped to bare skin and sent through a human carwash to rid her of street grime. She’s then outfitted with something akin to an engine control unit — a neurochip embedded in her brain — and detailed

with a manicure, pedicure, haircut and makeup that transform her into a flawless beauty.

The Enders, meanwhile, treat their rented teen bodies as if they were Hertz loaners. The rentals have no idea what’s happening to their bodies, which are being controlled via neurochip by the Enders, whose brains control the action.

Callie’s chip, however, is defective. Callie is supposed to wake up at Prime Destinations only at the end of a monthlong rental. Instead, she wakes up in a nightclub where she can hear the voice of her renter, and the two wrestle for control of Callie’s mind and body.

“Starters” simultaneously exploits the comedic and nefarious possibilities of old minds inhabiting young bodies: There’s the fact that Enders in rented teen bodies prefer hanging out not with real teens but with other renting Enders, so they can talk about knitting and other senior fare. In her rented life, Callie begins to fall in love with a teen she meets while living like a rich person. She also uncovers the real motives behind Prime Destinations in a fast-paced, high-stakes narrative in which few characters are what they seem.

The only thing better than a terrific concept is one that is as well executed as “Starters.” Readers who have been waiting for a worthy successor to Suzanne Collins’ “The Hunger Games” will find it here. Dystopian sci-fi at its best, “Starters” is a terrific series kickoff with a didn’t-see-that-coming conclusion that will leave readers on the edges of their seats, waiting for the second and final book, “Enders,” which will be out this year.

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‘Starters’

By Lissa Price
Random House
Children’s Books,
352 pages, \$17.99,
for ages 12 and
older

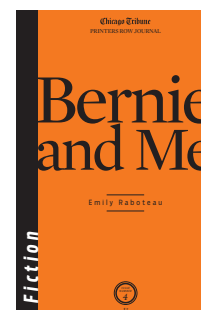
MEMBERS CHAT | EMILY RABOTEAU



Thomas Sayers Ellis photo

Emily Raboteau, author of “Bernie and Me,” last week’s fiction story, will join Printers Row for a live chat at **noon on Wednesday**. Elizabeth Taylor will lead the discussion. Raboteau is the author of the novel, “The Professor’s Daughter,” and the creative nonfiction work, “Searching for Zion,” forthcoming from Grove Press in January 2013. She teaches creative writing in Harlem at the City College of New York.

Visit chicagotribune.com/printersrow for a schedule of upcoming members-only events, including regular online chats with authors from our Fiction series. This week’s Fiction installment: “Modern Medicine” by Kodi Scheer.



West Loop, where Sullivan had previously worked with some corporate clients. (See the Sidewalks column in the A&E section for more about Catalyst Ranch.)

That is where I met the authors.

“We would get here every month or so,” says Sullivan. “It’s tough to find time to meet with seven kids between us. When we were here, we never wasted a second. All work.”

“Because of who we worked with in radio we were used to criticism,” says Kaempfer. “We knew how to take it and not take it personally. We have a great respect for one another.”

And so the novel was born.

It is firmly set in Chicago — the Waveland Bowl plays a big part — and spans a bit more than three decades. “It is,” says Kaempfer, “three intertwining stories about how two seconds can change lives forever.”

They were pleased with what they created and decided to move ahead. They considered going the conventional publishing route and finding an agent who would then find a publisher. They quickly realized the mess that is today’s publishing business and so Kaempfer started his own firm, with long-time pal and business partner David Stern, a sales and marketing executive. It is called Eckhartz Press, its name combining the first names of the men’s fathers, Eckhard and Fritz, respectively.

“It’s been a great experience so far,” says Kaempfer. “We had complete control of the process, from the typeface to the cover art [striking original work by Chicago artist/musician Jon Langford]. And almost immediately I started getting flooded with books by local authors.”

He liked some of those books: There is a party Friday from 6-9 p.m. at August House Studio, 2113 W. Roscoe St. for Eckhartz’s second release, “Down at the Golden Coin,” a novel by Kim Strickland, whose first novel, “Wish Club,” was published by California-based Three Rivers Press in 2007.

That’s all well and good but the obvious question is: Will you two collaborate on another novel?

“I think we’d like to try it again,” Sullivan starts to say.

“Yes, we would,” says Kaempfer.

“We went into this with no expectations,” says Sullivan. “We just showed up and started.”

“But now we’ve had such positive feedback and solid sales,” says Kaempfer.

“Yes, it’s gone so well that our expectations are going to be so much higher,” says Sullivan.

There was some talk of heading to the nearby Holiday Grill and Bar, but the authors had to get home to their wives and kids so I went there alone and reread the first few chapters of “The Living Wills.” Nice bar. Good book.

rkogan@tribune.com