

FICTION

New York Times best sellers

■ Fiction

- 1. 4th Of July** — James Patterson, Maxine Paetro. Little, Brown, \$27.95
- 2. True Believer** — Nicholas Sparks. Warner, \$24.95
- 3. The Mermaid Chair** — Sue Monk Kidd. Viking, \$24.95
- 4. The Da Vinci Code** — Dan Brown. Doubleday, \$24.95; special illustrated edition, \$35
- 5. No Place Like Home** — Mary Higgins Clark. Simon & Schuster, \$25.95
- 6. In the Company of Cheerful Ladies** — Alexander McCall Smith. Pantheon, \$19.95
- 7. Revenge of the Sith** — Matthew Stover. Lucas/Del Rey/Ballantine, \$25.95
- 8. The Innocent** — Harlan Coben. Dutton, \$26.95
- 9. Pawley's Island** — Dorothea Benton Frank. Berkley, \$24.95
- 10. Haunted** — Chuck Palahniuk. Doubleday, \$24.95

■ Nonfiction

- 1. The World Is Flat** — Thomas L. Friedman. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, \$27.50
- 2. Freakonomics** — Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner. Morrow, \$25.95
- 3. A Lotus Grows In The Mud** — Goldie Hawn, Wendy Holden. \$25.95
- 4. My Life So Far** — Jane Fonda. Random House, \$26.95
- 5. Blink** — Malcolm Gladwell. Little, Brown, \$25.95
- 6. Down Came The Rain** — Brooke Shields. Hyperion, \$23.95
- 7. Elvis By The Presleys** — Ed. by David Ritz. Crown, \$24.95
- 8. On Bull-----** — Harry G. Frankfurt. Princeton University, \$9.95
- 9. Searching For The Sound** — Phil Lesh. Little, Brown, \$25.95
- 10. Baby Laughs** — Jenny McCarthy. Dutton, \$19.95

Story examines love, loneliness

By Jessica Slater
ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS

Leo Gursky taps on his radiator every night to let his upstairs neighbor know he's still alive. He carries a card that explains who he is and what should be done in the event of his death. He wonders who will be the last person to see him alive, thinking most likely it will be the delivery boy from the local Chinese take-out he orders from four nights a week.

Gursky has survived Nazi persecution in Poland, the loss of his childhood sweetheart to another man and the loss of the son he never knew, but he has survived by becoming invisible to the world. Lonely and fearing death, he declares: "All I want is not to die on a day when I went unseen."

The History of Love is a poignant and playful novel, grounding romanticism with gritty details of loss, loneliness and things people do to survive.

As a young man, Leo Gursky falls in love with a girl named Alma, and writes a book — also called *The History of Love*.

He later entrusts the novel to his friend, Zvi Litvinoff. Unbeknownst to Leo, Litvinoff translates the book into Spanish and publishes it in Chile under his own name.

Krauss spins a complicated web of intersecting stories, involving Leo, Litvinoff, a 14-year old-girl, Alma (named after the character in Gursky's book), Alma's widowed mother, who is working on a translation of *The History of Love*, and Leo's son,

Isaac, a successful writer. The plot is part unfolding mystery, part comedy of errors as characters try to make sense of their own stories.

Ultimately it is Leo's book that connects them, and in part, Krauss' novel is about how writing lives and breathes in the world:

"Staring out of the window, Litvinoff imagined the 2,000 copies of *The History of Love* as a flock of two thousand homing pigeons that could flap their wings and return to him to report on how many tears shed, how many laughs, how many passages read aloud, how many cruel closings of the cover after reading barely a page, how many never opened at all."

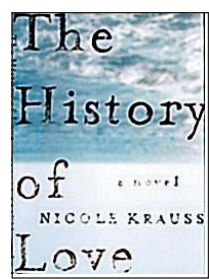
It is also about the act of writing: as a young man, Leo writes out of love, but 57 years after he'd given it up, he begins to write again, this time for himself: "I did it for myself alone, not for anyone else, and that was the difference. It didn't matter if I found the words, and more than that, I knew it would be impossible to find the right ones. And because I accepted that what I'd once believed was possible was in fact impossible, and because I knew I would never show a word of it to anyone, I wrote a sentence... It made me happy, like talking aloud to myself, which I sometimes do."

It's hard not to care about these characters because they are painted with such tenderness and truth. Krauss has an exceptional skill for portraying the more visceral elements of human fear alongside the most delicate moments of love and connection.



Nicole Krauss spins a web of stories in a novel that explores love and loneliness.

JOYCE RAVID



History of Love

■ **By Nicole Krauss.** Norton, 252 pages, \$23.95.
■ **Grade: A**

In the end, Leo's loneliness is not eradicated by love, it is fueled by love. When he finally follows the woman he loves to America, tracking her down only to discover that he was too late and she had married another man: "... he did the hardest thing he'd ever done in his life: he picked up his hat and walked away."

Krauss' novel is not a "happily ever after" history; it presents the myriad manifestations of love in the life of one man, and in the lives of those connected to his.

As such it is less a treatise on the transcendent powers of love than a study of survival: how a story survives

and changes the course of lives, and how writing itself can serve not only as a vibrant celebration of young love, but as quiet confirmation, like the fog of breath on a mirror, that a lonely old man is still alive.

Leo Gursky dies alone. If Orson Welles is to be believed, we all die alone. But in the course of our lives, stories — and histories — are made. Krauss isn't offering love as the answer; love is the question that we spend our whole lives answering.

Jessica Slater is assistant interactive editor for technology at the Rocky Mountain News.

Local best sellers

■ Fiction

- 1. The Mermaid Chair** — Sue Monk Kidd
- 2. The Closers** — Michael Connelly
- 3. The Hot Kid** — Elmore Leonard
- 4. Zorro** — Isabel Allende
- 5. Broken Prey** — John Sandford
- 6. Badwater** — Clinton McKinzie
- 7. Haunted** — Chuck Palahniuk
- 8. In the Company of Cheerful Ladies** — Alexander McCall Smith
- 9. The Ivy Chronicles** — Karen Quinn
- 10. The Journeys of Socrates** — Dan Millman

■ Nonfiction

- 1. The World Is Flat** — Thomas Friedman
- 2. You: The Owner's Manual** — Michael F. Roizen, Mehmet Oz
- 3. Freakonomics** — Steven D. Levitt, Stephen J. Dubner
- 4. Blink** — Malcolm Gladwell
- 5. My Life So Far** — Jane Fonda
- 6. A Medley of Gardens: Denver Style** — Maureen Jabour
- 7. On Bull-----** — Harry G. Frankfurt
- 8. French Women Don't Get Fat** — Mireille Guiliano
- 9. What We Ache For** — Oriah Mountain Dreamer
- 10. The Little Red Book of Selling** — Jeffrey Gitomer

Information for the local best sellers comes from the *Tattered Cover*, *Borders Books in Englewood* and *The Boulder Book Store*.

Novellas showcase crime, mystery, suspense

By Mark Graham
SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

Can't pass up a bargain? Have I got a deal for you! How about 10 for the price of one? That's right — 10 brand new, hot-off-the-presses, short novels by some of the top authors alive today, all rolled into one book.

The rarest of literary works, novellas (stories ranging roughly from 10,000 to 40,000 words) are among the most enjoyable reading experiences. Like short stories, novellas have to be lean, concise and quick to involve the reader. But they are long enough to develop intricate plots and characters and follow them to multiple settings.

The problem is that, too long for most magazines and too short to be books in their own right, they don't have much of a market.

Enter Ed McBain (aka Evan Hunter), one of the best-known writers of crime fiction. His works, including 55 in the 87th Precinct series, include more than 100-million copies in print.

"Here was the brilliant idea," he writes in the book's introduction. "Round up the best writers of mystery, crime and suspense novels, and ask them to (each) write a brand new



Crime fiction guru Ed McBain, left, has rounded up some of the best crime, mystery and suspense writers for his novella *Transgressions*. Shown are Walter Mosley, left, Jeffery Deaver, and Joyce Carol Oates.

novella for a collection of similarly superb novellas to be published anywhere in the world for the first time."

McBain explains that, although this was a really "keen" idea, there were some difficulties in getting it off the ground. Nevertheless, his obvious success will be readily apparent to readers of *Transgressions*.

Here's what you get for the price of one book:

■ Donald Westlake, the master of combining suspense with humor, shows that crime sometimes pays after all in "Walking Around Money." Westlake's frequent protagonist John Dortmunder and one of his cronies gets involved in a scam to print a half-million dollars worth of foreign currency. Dortmunder is a lot

brighter than he appears, and there is no way a bumbling ex-con is going to put one over on him.

■ In "Hostages," Anne Perry takes readers inside the civil strife in Northern Ireland, as a Protestant leader's own daughter becomes involved in the kidnapping of the reverend. The preacher's wife is a fine example of Perry's talent for creating strong female protagonists.

■ In the most disturbing novella in the anthology, Joyce Carol Oates' "The Corn Maiden," three middle-school girls kidnap a learning-disabled child from their school and hide her in the basement of the leader's ancestral home. The idea is to prepare the youngster for sacrifice in an Onigara Indian ritual they learned about on a field trip. You think, "Surely, they won't kill this innocent child." Then you remember, Oates has written about amoral murderers before.

Transgressions

■ Edited by Ed McBain. Forge, 784 pages, \$27.95.

■ Grade: A

■ In McBain's own story, "Merely Hate," taxi drivers are being murdered in New York City. In each case, the cabbie is a Muslim, and the killer has spray-painted a blue Star of David on the windshield. Journalists and local citizens assume these are hate crimes and are looking for a Jewish serial killer. The situation escalates to other hate crimes, and a mosque is fire bombed. But maybe the six-pointed star means something else.

■ The longest — and my favorite — of the 10 novellas is "The Ransome Women" by John Farris. When an artist takes his beautiful model to an isolated island off the coast of Maine for a year of painting, the model's detective boyfriend suspects more than art is going on. The story reminded me of John Fowles at his best in the novels, *The Collector* and *The Magus*.

The collection is rounded out with stories by Walter Mosley, Sharyn McCrumb, Lawrence Block, Jeffery Deaver and Stephen King. Two stories reflect the changes in people's lives following the events of Sept. 11, 2001, including King's "The Things They Left Behind." In all, the selections are superior to much of what I've read recently.

Now it's time to go to your nearest bookstore and snap up that bargain — less than \$3 per novella.

Mark Graham reviews *Unreal Worlds* stories regularly in *Weekend@Home*. He lives in Arvada.