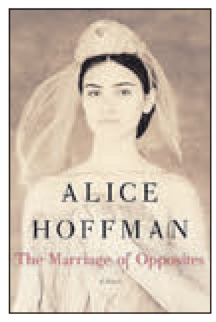
Books



NEW ON THE SHELF

"The Marriage of Opposites." By Alice Hoffman. Simon & Schuster. 384 pages. $27.99

If you can't get away from it all this summer, let your mind drift to the island of St. Thomas. Immerse yourself in a fictional account of the life of the mother who helped give birth to an art movement. Time-travel to Rachel Pizzarro's early 1800s childhood in the island's tight-knit Jewish community. Hoffman's latest work is rich with details that transport readers to a tropical paradise. "The Marriage of Opposites" invites comparisons to Gabriel García Marquez, but Hoffman follows her own star.

Photos by Gabe Souza/Staff Photographer

Chad Gilley in the attic of his South Portland home, where with painstaking care he stores the comic books that he has been collecting for more than 30 years.

Comics relief

Chad Gilley's once clandestine obsession with a particular art form is out there now for all to see (on YouTube no less), and he's good with that.

By CHAD GILLEY

For a long time, I had a secret in my attic.

It wasn't a closely held secret, but you had to get reasonably close to me before I would reveal that I have had an obsession with comics, off and on, for over 30 years, and there are boxes upon boxes of them in my attic, efficiently filed and preserved.

Lately, however, I've thrown caution to the wind. As superheroes have become the hot media genre, I've started to get over the idea that people, when they learn my secret, will take me less seriously.

Every week, I climb the ladder to the attic, turn on my video camera and share, with the handful of people who care, my enthusiasm for an art form.

I'm old enough to remember watching and enjoying George Reeves as Superman in reruns on our black and white TV. I remember the 1966 Batman TV show, but I'm pretty sure the original run was past my bedtime as a 5-year-old, when my fondest possession was my Superman costume.

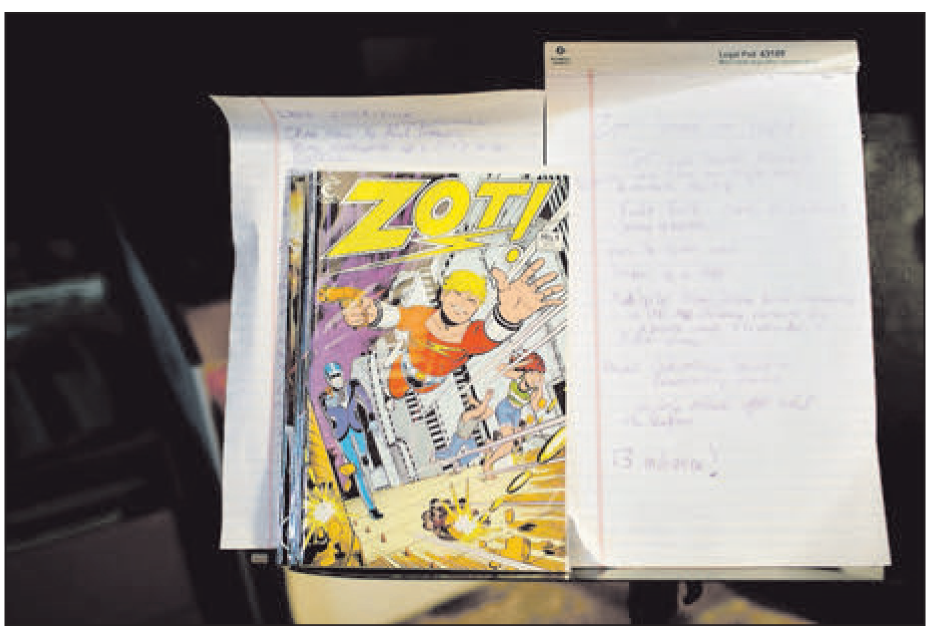
The hook wasn't set, though, until college, when I stumbled across a pile of Savage Sword of Conan magazines at a hotel where I was staying in Norway, Maine.

That led to a stop at a nearby comics shop. (Who had ever heard of such a thing in 1982?) and a whole world of art, story and history was opened up to me.

Now, more than 30 years later, I can see my collection of something like 7,000 or 8,000 comic and related books, magazines, and posters in the attic as a time capsule.

I have a nice selection of the comics I remember from my childhood in the 1960s. In each one, I can see reflected the kid culture of my early years. The fashions, the hairstyles, even the ads for the Saturday Morning Cartoon lineups, take me back to a time when all I wanted for Christmas was a new G.I. Joe.

What I didn't know at the time was that I was seeing history unfold before my eyes. Pioneers like Jack Kirby, Stan Lee, Steve Ditko and John Romita were laying the groundwork for generations of to come, building on the work of the 1930s and '40s, inventing a new language and timeless characters like Spider-Man, The Incredible Hulk, The Thing and Daredevil – characters that live on long after they (and I) are gone.



Gilley makes notes for the YouTube presentations, featuring different magazines from his collection, that he puts on the Internet each week.

Gilley caught the comics bug when he stumbled upon a pile of Savage Sword of Conan magazines at a Norway hotel.

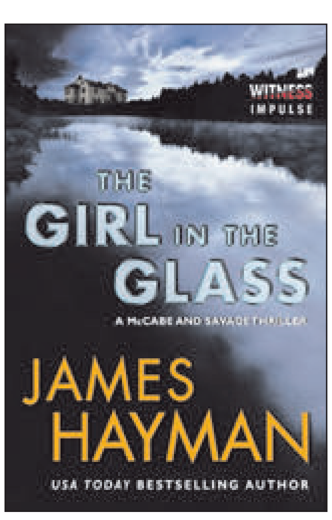
In the '70s, science fiction and computers commanded my attention, opening my mind to the potential of the future, and a new generation of creators made their mark on the comics genre as it began to grapple with the changing world.

Writer Denny O'Neil and artist Neil Adams confronted racism in Green Lantern, and reclaimed Batman from his 1960s TV camp. Writer/artist Jim Starlin gave Captain Marvel a cosmic psychedelic twist. Bernie Wrightson's artwork in Swamp Thing and House of Mystery elevated comic book illustration with a creepy realism.

As the '80s dawned, the old distribution channels were changing. Comic stores started springing up and with them a new kind of reader. As the old system of self-censorship

Please see **COMICS,** Page E9

Twisty, turny new James Hayman mystery double the fun



By FRANK O SMITH

It's complicated.

That's often the refrain you get from people about to tell you a convoluted story about their family, love life or estranged relationships. The same can be said of James Hayman's new mystery, "The Girl in the Glass," fourth in his thriller series featuring Detective Sergeant Mike McCabe and his partner, Sergeant Maggie Savage, of the Portland Police Department. In addition to family, love lives and estrangement, Hayman adds wives, ex-wives, girlfriends, lovers and sisters.

At the heart of the story is a murder. Actually, two suspected murders. One is that of Veronica Aimee Whitby,

REVIEW

"The Girl in the Glass." By James Hayman. $2.99 (eBook). Witness Impulse. HarperCollins paperback due out Oct. 6.

known by all as Aimee – a beautiful, smart, 18-year-old who just graduated top of her class from Penfield Academy, a tony Portland private school. The other is the mysterious death of her great-great-grandmother, for whom she was named, that occurred 108 years prior. Both were last seen alive on Whitby Island, a beacon to the stature of one of the richest, old-money families of Portland. Both victims are found nude. Both have the letter "A" carved on their chests.

It's complicated, and the story is only getting started.

At the graduation party hosted by Aimee's father Edward on Whitby Island, Aimee-the-younger manages to upstage her dad during the unveiling of a portrait of the original Aimee painted by a famous artist in 1904. Her father recently paid a fortune to bring the painting back into the family. Unbeknownst to anyone, the young Aimee has commissioned a red gown that mirrors the one in the por-

Please see **GIRL,** Page E6

Best-Sellers

FICTION

HARDCOVER

1. **"Go Set A Watchman,"** by Harper Lee (Harper)
2. **"All the Light We Cannot See,"** by Anthony Doerr (Scribner)
3. **"Circling the Sun,"** by Paula McLain (Ballantine)
4. **"The Rumor,"** by Elin Hildebrand (Little Brown)
5. **"Kitchens of the Great Midwest,"** by J. Ryan Stradal (Pamela Dorman)
6. **"Alert,"** by James Patterson; Michael Ledwidge (Little Brown)
7. **"The Nightingale,"** by Kristen Hannah (St. Martin's)
8. **"The Little Paris Bookshop,"** by Nina George (Crown)
9. **"The Marriage of Opposites,"** by Alice Hoffman (Simon & Schuster)
10. **"In the Unlikely Event,"** by Judy Blume (Knopf)

PAPERBACK

1. **"A Man Called Ove,"** by Fredrik Backman (Washington Square)
2. **"Station Eleven,"** by Emily St John Mandel (Vintage)
3. **"Norwegian by Night,"** by Derek B. Miller (Mariner)
4. **"To Kill a Mockingbird,"** by Harper Lee (Grand Central)
5. **"The Martian,"** by Andy Weir (Broadway)
6. **"The Rosie Effect,"** by Graeme Samson (Simon & Schuster)
7. **"Everything I Never Told You,"** by Celeste Ng (Penguin)
8. **"The Story of Land and Sea,"** by Katy Simpson Smith (Harper)
9. **"Euphoria,"** by Lily King (Grove)
10. **"The Vacationers,"** by Emma Straub (Riverhead)

NONFICTION

HARDCOVER

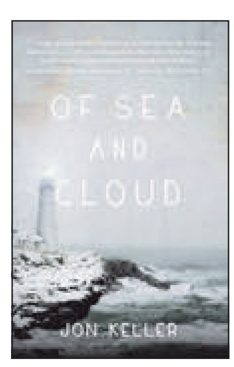
1. **"Being Mortal,"** by Atul Gawande (Metropolitan)
2. **"The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up,"** by Marie Kondo (Ten Speed)
3. **"Dead Wake,"** by Erik Larson (Crown)
4. **"The Wright Brothers,"** by David McCullough (Simon & Schuster)
5. **"The Negotiator,"** by George Mitchell (Simon & Schuster)
6. **"Between the World and Me,"** by Ta-Nehisi Coates (Spiegel & Grau)
7. **"Modern Romance,"** by Aziz Ansari (Penguin)
8. **"The Oregon Trail,"** by Rinker Buck (Simon & Schuster)
9. **"Sick in the Head,"** by Judd Apatow (Random House)
10. **"Barbarian Days,"** by William Finnegan (Penguin)

PAPERBACK

1. **"Secret Garden,"** by Johanna Basford (Laurence King)
2. **"The Mindfulness Coloring Book,"** by Emma Farrarons (Experiment)
3. **"How to Love,"** by Thich Nhat Hanh (Parallax)
4. **"The Boys in the Boat,"** by Daniel James Brown (Penguin)
5. **"The Islandport Guide to Lighthouses in Maine,"** by Ted Panayotoff (Islandport)
6. **"Wild,"** by Cheryl Strayed (Vintage)
7. **"You Are a Badass,"** by Jen Sincero (Running Press)
8. **"A Walk in the Woods,"** by Bill Bryson (Broadway)
9. **"Unbroken,"** by Laura Hillenbrand (Random House)
10. **"This Changes Everything,"** by Naomi Klein (Simon & Schuster)

Nonesuch Books and Cards, South Portland

Signings, etc.



Join author Jon Keller for a brown bag lunch talk detailing his book "Of Sea and Cloud," a maritime story of two sons struggling to find their role in the lobster business following the loss of their father at sea, and the rivalries that threaten to ruin their family legacy. Attendees encouraged to bring a lunch.

WHEN: Noon Wednesday
WHERE: Rines Auditorium at Portland Public Library, 5 Monument Square
HOW MUCH: Free
INFO: 871-1700, ext. 723, or email harkness@portlandpubliclibrary.org

CLARK

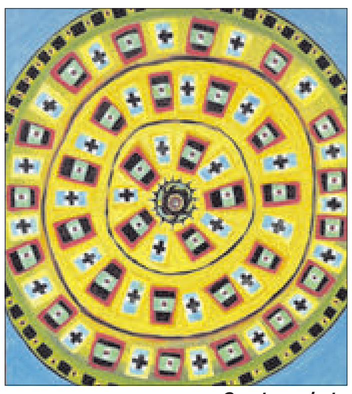
Continued from **Page E5**

sionism became not only about alienation, trauma and anxiety, but also a vehicle for individual experience and subjectivity (following Kierkegaard), as opposed to the Hegelian notions of rationality and system that had prevailed in prewar Europe.

Existentialist discourse fit the American propensity for feeling over intellect. It watered the roots of our romantic individuality, celebrated by the likes of Thomas Jefferson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Horatio Alger and Winslow Homer.

Subjectivity, after all, not only sets up the van Gogh-styled myth of an artist as an alienated individual struggling in isolation with his materials to express his genius, but it also offers an anything-goes response for the viewer. (What you see is what you see.) With existentialism, however watered down, American art could stake a claim on authenticity, selfhood, freedom and choice – the very building blocks of societal ethics.

Clark's movement between Mexico and Maine has allowed him to adopt a playful Mexican aesthetic, but it is a foil for his soul-scraping search for self, and the carnivalesque palette never quite dominates his work. Even in the all-red painting "In the Key of Red," a mouth and then chin come in focus, and from there we can't help but see a face. Clark's color is never complete cover.



Courtesy photo

"Shield"

The few works that seem to seek system over subject, like "This World Is Veiled" or "Gentle Barricade," critique decorative aesthetic as incomplete – a point quite clear even in their titles.

Clark's work has achieved a sense of clarity since the Farnsworth's major 2004 show "Blood and Stone: Paintings by Alan Clark." While the critical self-analysis and dedication to encounter with self have become more pronounced, his work is less defined by the uncomfortable angst associated with the postwar movements like art brut. We see this in terms of Clark's incorporating decorative modes that allow his painting to (so to speak) bring along a friend. It is the Mexican sense of boldness, palette and clarity that Clark uses to answer the question of aesthetic: Aesthetic is a vehicle for cultural communication. It is a way out of alienation and into society. Through aesthetic, Clark finds an individual's answer to the sometimes unbearable lightness of freedom: ethics and the social vehicle for morality. For Clark, aesthetic lights the path to being a good person in a society that values art and artists.

"Shield" is literally an emblematic painting. It reinforces Clark's centered compositional structure with bands that imply not only spiritual layers but even the structure of mandala-style paintings. While it is accessible in both traditional Western and abstract terms, for those drawn to Eastern meditational paintings, it's like a mystical welcome mat.

Bold clarity imbues Clark's paintings with a speedy immediacy, so our eyes pass over them quickly. But, while we associate spiritual content with the time-grinding slowness of quiet meditation, people inclined to this kind of visual experience often describe it as instant.

Clark's works tie many traditions of spiritually centered works together. "Black Ball in a Square," for example, has a witty title, but the nod to Malevich's mystical suprematism is clear. And the unironically essentialist portrait of "A Buddha" encourages a broad reading of Clark's work in general. Whether you see his work in existential or mystical terms – or otherwise – it is clear Clark is boldly tapping into fundamental facets of Western art and contemporary painting.

Freelance writer Daniel Kany is an art historian who lives in Cumberland. He can be contacted at:
dankany@gmail.com

Photos courtesy of Jane McCloskey

"Lobster Boats, Houses and Horse"

MCCLOSKEY

continued from **Page E1**

tionship to art while he was working, and she learned about it firsthand when she began building her home. She showed her father an early design for the cabin, at 24-by-16 feet, or a proportion of 3 to 2. He suggested she alter is slightly, building it 26-by-16 instead and resulting in a proportion of 1.6 to 1. That nearly exactly matches the proportioning system her father employed in his art.

"Lobster Boat off Little Deer Isle," by Robert McCloskey.

Robert McCloskey painted his environment. The book is filled with images of boats, gulls and island homes. He used bright colors and worked in a range of media, including pencil, charcoal, watercolor, oil, acrylic and casein. Later, he made puppets.

Learning about her father's art and writing about it has helped McCloskey reconcile a difficult and challenging relationship. She got along well with her father when she was young, but they drifted as adults. She attributes part of their schism to a nervous breakdown she said he suffered when the family lived in Mexico.

She's never understood what happened to her father and speculates in her book that it might have been professional crisis. He had achieved fame and was widely recognized for his work, but might have feared reaching the pinnacle of his professional life at age 44. There was no way to go but down, she writes.

Regardless of the cause, her father began to withdraw. And so did she. "My father turned inward, and I turned inward," she said.

Later, when she was diagnosed with chemical sensitivities and mercury poisoning, the relationship became more strained. "My father thought I was crazy," she said. "He was ashamed of me. It was very difficult."

They reconciled in the years before his death, for which McCloskey is grateful.

Her father never embraced his fame, she said. As a young girl, she witnessed the effect of fame on the family. One spring in the late 1950s, they had just come to Maine from Mexico, where they had spent the winter. When they arrived at Deer Isle, fans were waiting for them. "Time of Wonder," which featured their Deer Isle home and environs, was McCloskey's latest book. People were able to locate the family home based on the illustrations, McCloskey said.

Her father was horrified. "He just wasn't comfortable with fame, and I believe that was one of the reasons he went underground," she said.

As an older woman, McCloskey is able to look back at her father fondly. For one thing, she's come to respect the aging process and how people navigate end-of-life journeys. McCloskey plays guitar and sings, and lately has joined a hospice group that performs songs to people who are dying. It's one of the most humbling things she's ever done, she said.

"When people are dying, it's an honor to be there," she said. "It's a way of coming to terms with my end of life. The golden years, they become precious."

In many ways, she's gotten to know her father better now than ever, because she understands his art in ways she didn't before. And making art, she said, whether for his books or for pleasure, was central to his existence.

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Twitter: pphbkeyes

Gabe Souza/Staff Photographer

Chad Gilley is visible in a monitor that is part of the set-up he uses to create his YouTube videos.

COMICS

Continued from **Page E4**

imposed on the industry during the witch hunts of the 1950s broke down, more adult-oriented content became commercially viable. Suddenly the topical playing field for comic storytellers was wide open.

This was the environment that spawned Frank Miller's take on Daredevil, which drew liberally from the Japanese comics traditions, or Alan Moore's Watchmen, considered by some the best comic book story ever published. This was the fertile ground that nurtured my obsession.

The industry had some bumps along the way. The collector/speculator boom and bust in the mid '90s, embodied perhaps most significantly by the "Death of Superman" hype, took a toll, and Marvel Comics actually was in bankruptcy for a while. But the power of the images and ideas and the creative energy of the artists and writers persisted. Along the way, the nerds took over the world, and comic books somehow rose with them. Comics and graphic novels occupy spots in libraries, bookstores and best-seller lists. I don't think the 5-year-old in his Superman costume ever would have doubted it, but the 30 year-old comics nerd struggling to be taken seriously never would have expected it.

If you buy five or 10 of something every week, for 20 or 30 years, they start to pile up. In my attic, I have a singular record of the ebbs and flows of an industry and my relationship with it. I have a chronicle of the artistic evolution of both a media industry and the talented creators whose work I admire and enjoy. I have a detailed document of the prevailing attitudes reflected in popular culture of the last 50 or so years. There are stories on the pages, and there are stories behind the pages, and both are fascinating.

Chad Gilley is digital product manager for Maine Today Media, parent company of the Maine Sunday Telegram. Learn more about his collection at chadsattic.com. He can be contacted at:
cgilley@mainetoday.com
Twitter: ChadGilley

To keep your magazines mint, here's what you need to do

Any comic book collector will tell you that an un-insulated attic is not the perfect place to store comics. Faced with a collection the size of a cord and a half of wood in a two-bedroom bungalow, my storage options are limited. Basements can be damp and flood, and attics go hot and cold. Neither is the best environment. The key things to avoid in storing paper collectibles is moisture, light and extreme temperatures.

Fortunately in Maine, temperatures in the attic are only really high for a few weeks of the year, and low temperatures, while not ideal, do their damage much more slowly. Books that are properly handled and cared for, in bags and boxes created for the purpose, can stay in really nice shape for a good long time. I have pulled comics out of the bags I put them in in the mid-1980s, and they look like they came off the newsstand yesterday.

■ The inexpensive paper in old comics decays over time because it contains acid. Keep comics in the least-reactive environment possible.

■ Read them carefully, then store them in a bag created for that purpose. You can buy bags in every comic book shop. I like polypropelene bags from a company called BCW, which cost about $5 for 100. Mylar sleeves can cost 50 cents or a $1 each, so I use them only for my very best comics. Mylar won't degrade over time; poly bags will. Poly bags should be replaced periodically. I've spent a lot of time recently replacing 20-year-old bags. The bags were foggy and yellow, but the comics inside were still mint.

■ For extra protection, you can get specially made cardstock boards to put in the bag to keep the spine from bending in storage.

■ Store comics standing up in a closed comic book box, preventing both light from outside and the weight of other comics from damaging them.

– Chad Gilley

For most collectors, even die-hards like me, it's a not-for-profit labor of love

The truth is, your comic book collection very probably isn't worth all that much money. Most aren't. The truly valuable comics are extremely rare and in perfect condition – a vanishingly small number of titles. For most comics published after 1980, there's far more supply than demand.

There are exceptions: books with small print runs that became popular later. If you have a pristine first print copy of "The Walking Dead" #1 – I don't – then you have something. It came from an independent publisher, and not many were printed. Demand is high because of later popularity, and you might get a couple thousand dollars for a book you paid $3 for in 2003.

Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird first printed 3,000 copies of their self-published "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" #1 in 1984 and sold them all in the New England area. You might get $5,000 for one in perfect shape. I don't have that one either.

If you buy comics to get rich, you'll almost certainly be disappointed. If you buy them because you enjoy them, because you appreciate the work of the artists and writers, or even because you think the Silver Surfer is really cool, then you can't be disappointed. Even if you didn't grab that "Walking Dead" #1 in 2003, you enjoy what you have.

– Chad Gilley