

THE BEST OF 2012

Year in review: Books

# Top reads include Texas them

Cisneros' short among favorites of Express-News critics

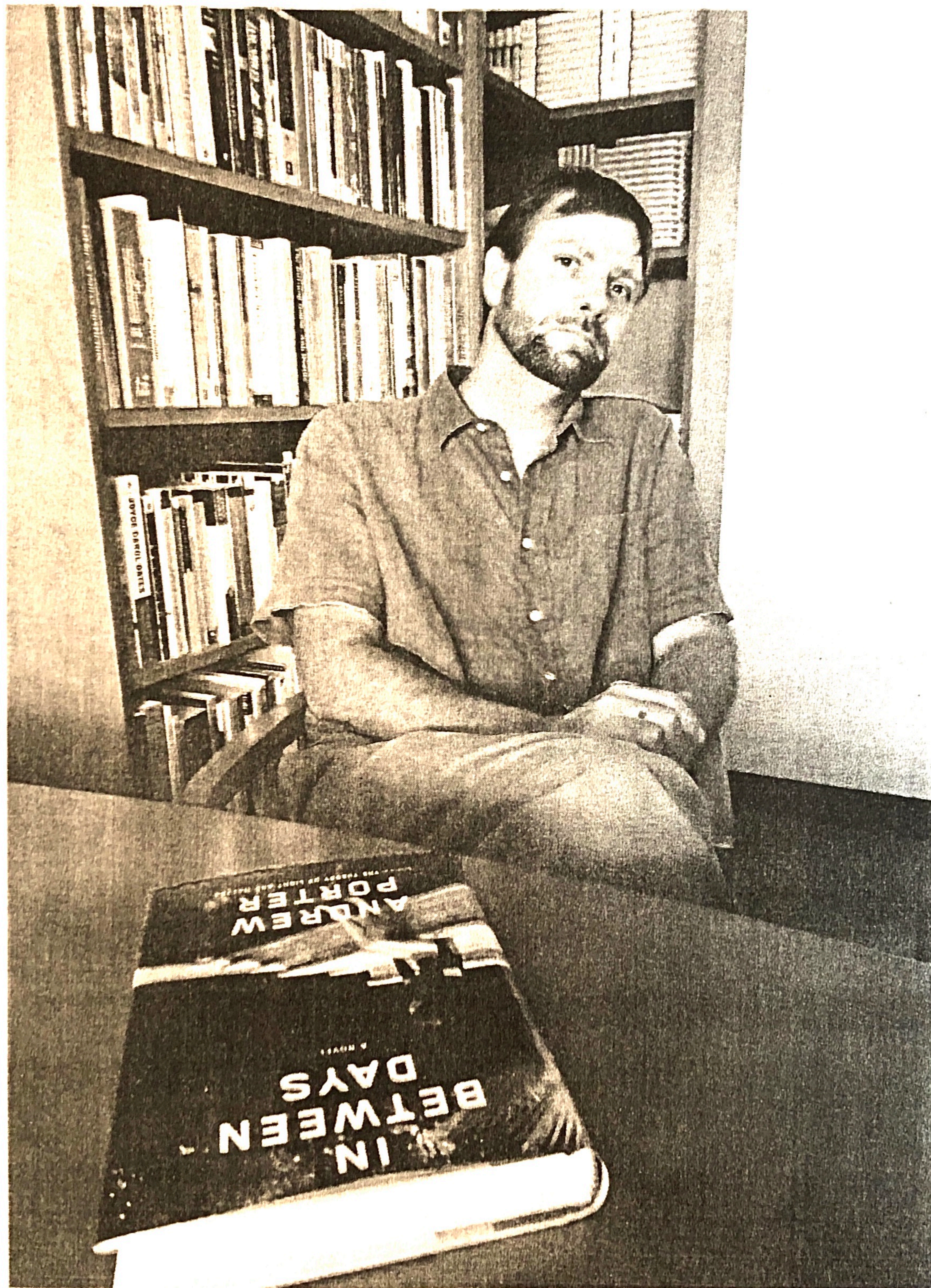
Express-News critics

Random House recently announced that every employee, from janitor to editor, received a year-end bonus of \$5,000, thanks to the multimillion-dollar sales of just two books: "Fifty Shades of Grey," the erotic publishing phenomenon by British author E. L. James, and "Gone Girl," Gillian Flynn's twisted romance. That's a good thing.

Critically speaking, one or two books stood out this year — Louise Erdrich deservedly won the National Book Award for fiction for "The Round House," while journalist Katherine Boo took home the honor in nonfiction for "Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity."

The New York Times Notable Books of 2012 featured great reads like Hilary Mantel's "Bring Up the Bodies," Alice Munro's story collection "Dear Life," Dave Eggers' "A Hologram For The King," "NW" By Zadie Smith, David Maraniss' "Barack Obama: The Story," David Byrne's "How Music Works" and R.J. Smith's "The One: The Life and Music of James Brown." But John Irving's "In One Person"? Pass.

There were other highly anticipated books that never cleared the ozone: J.K. Rowling's initial stab at adult fiction "The Casual Vacancy," Tom Wolfe's "Back to Blood," Bob Woodward's "Price of Politics," Salman Rushdie's "Joseph Anton" and Robert Caro's "The Passage Of Power: The Years of Lyndon Johnson," which did make many best-of lists, but had some uncharacteristically sloppy errors discovered by Express-News critic David



San Antonio writer Andrew Porter's debut novel "In Between Days," chronicles the fragmentation and reformation of a Houston family.

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American Derv  
By Ayad Akhta  
Little, Brown, \$

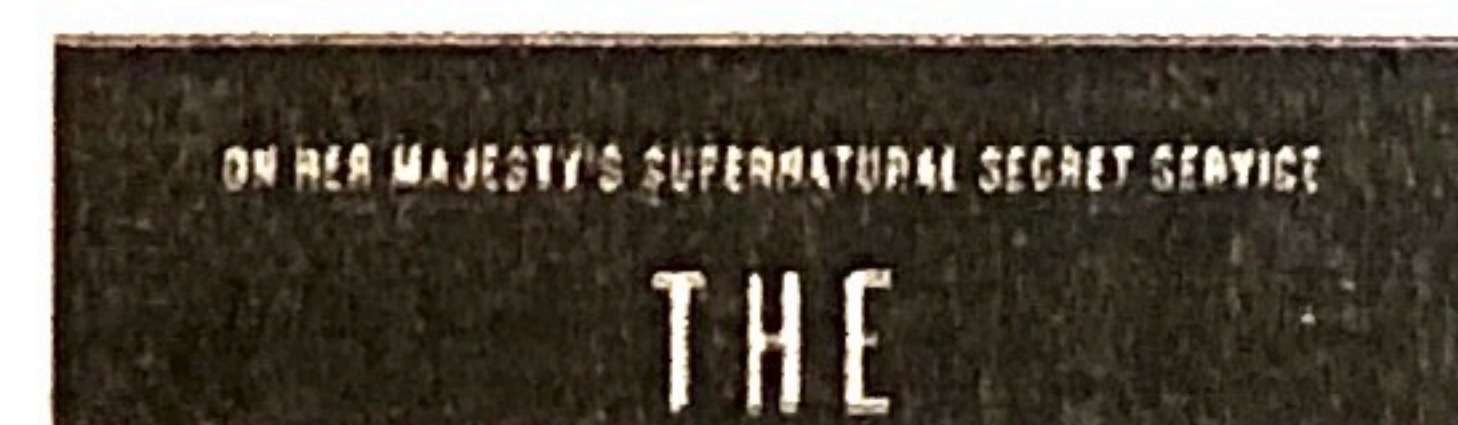
Ayad Akhtar, a young playwright, his debut novel, contradictions — ual, cultural — o Muslim in the U. "American Dervi family betrayal c meat of the novel leave a hole in th biggest sinner. W are Muslim, Jewi tian, this coming hits home.



Gone Girl  
By Gillian Flynn  
Crown, \$25

The creep-out b summer, "Gone G runaway best-sell supposedly sweet who is apparently with all evidence p her husband. But more to it than th Amy Dunne's mar reining carnival r dark tunnel of psy nuclear-family wa ed, the ending left desired, but Flynn one of the slipperi verely sociopathic this side of Hannib You'll have to read to find out which

Billy Lynn's Long Walk: A Novel  
By Ben Fountain



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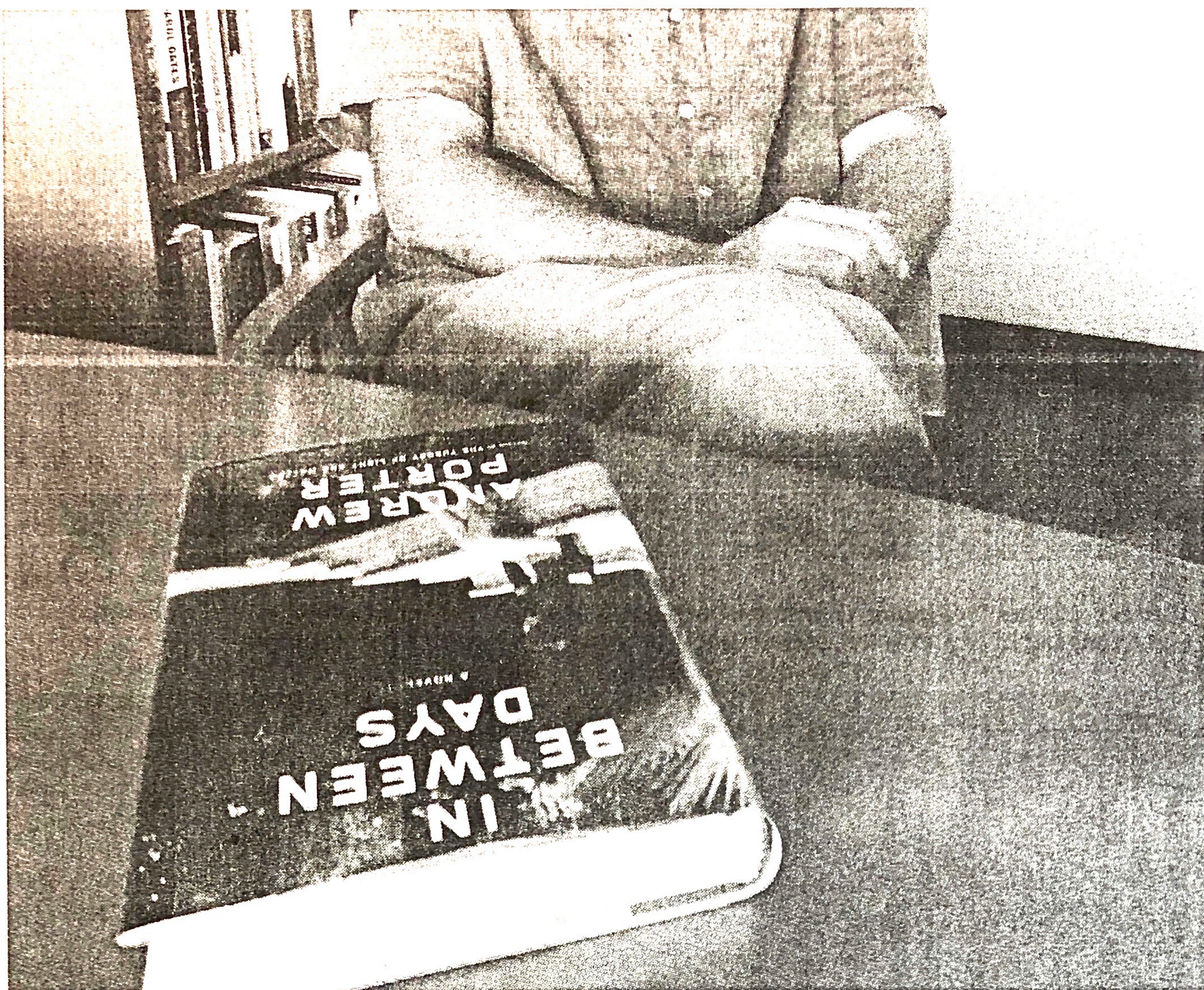
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With an eye on Texas-related books but not necessarily limited to them, here’s a look at what caught the Express-News’ literary fancy in 2012.

## Fiction

### \* **In Between Days** By Andrew Porter Knopf, \$24.95

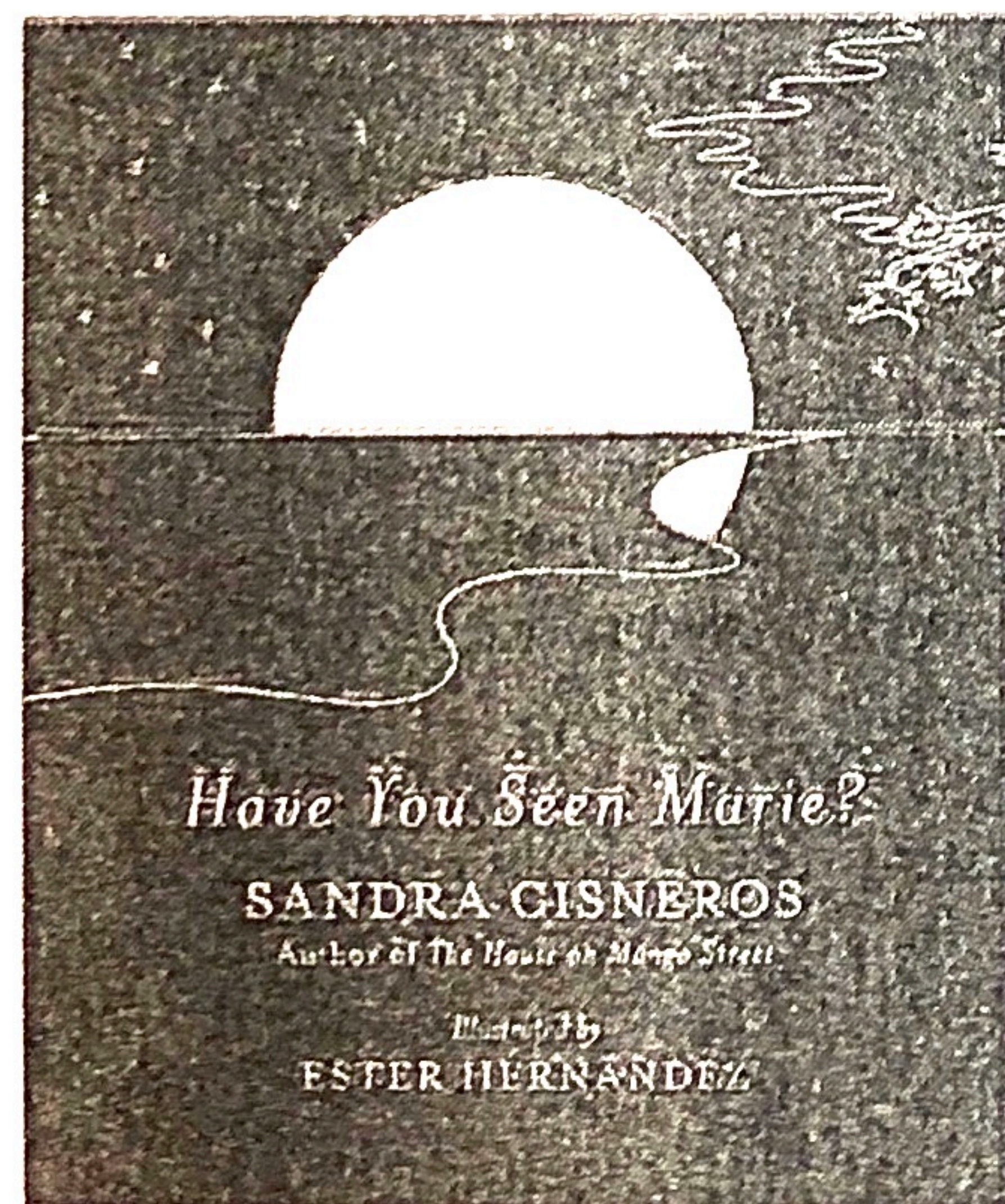
San Antonio writer Andrew Porter’s debut novel chronicles the fragmentation and (partial) reformation of a Houston family whose college-age daughter is caught in the wrong place at the wrong time with the wrong people, gets suspended from college, and goes missing. Porter, a professor in the English department at Trinity University, writes with intuitiveness about the complexities of family life, creates indelible characters and develops a sense of unease as thick as Houston smog. It’s our fictional work of the year.



Courtesy

San Antonio writer Andrew Porter’s debut novel “In Between Days,” chronicles the fragmentation and reformation of a Houston family.

idly in his 2008 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel “The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao.” But don’t worry; Díaz does sensitivity and boorishness with equal aplomb.



### **Have You Seen Marie?** By Sandra Cisneros Knopf, \$21

Set in San Antonio’s historic King William district, “Marie” has been described as “a picture book for adults.” Based on a true story, it’s about a neighborhood search for a lost cat that leads to deeper feelings about gone loved ones. Chicana artist Ester Hernández contributes wonderful color illustrations of real King William

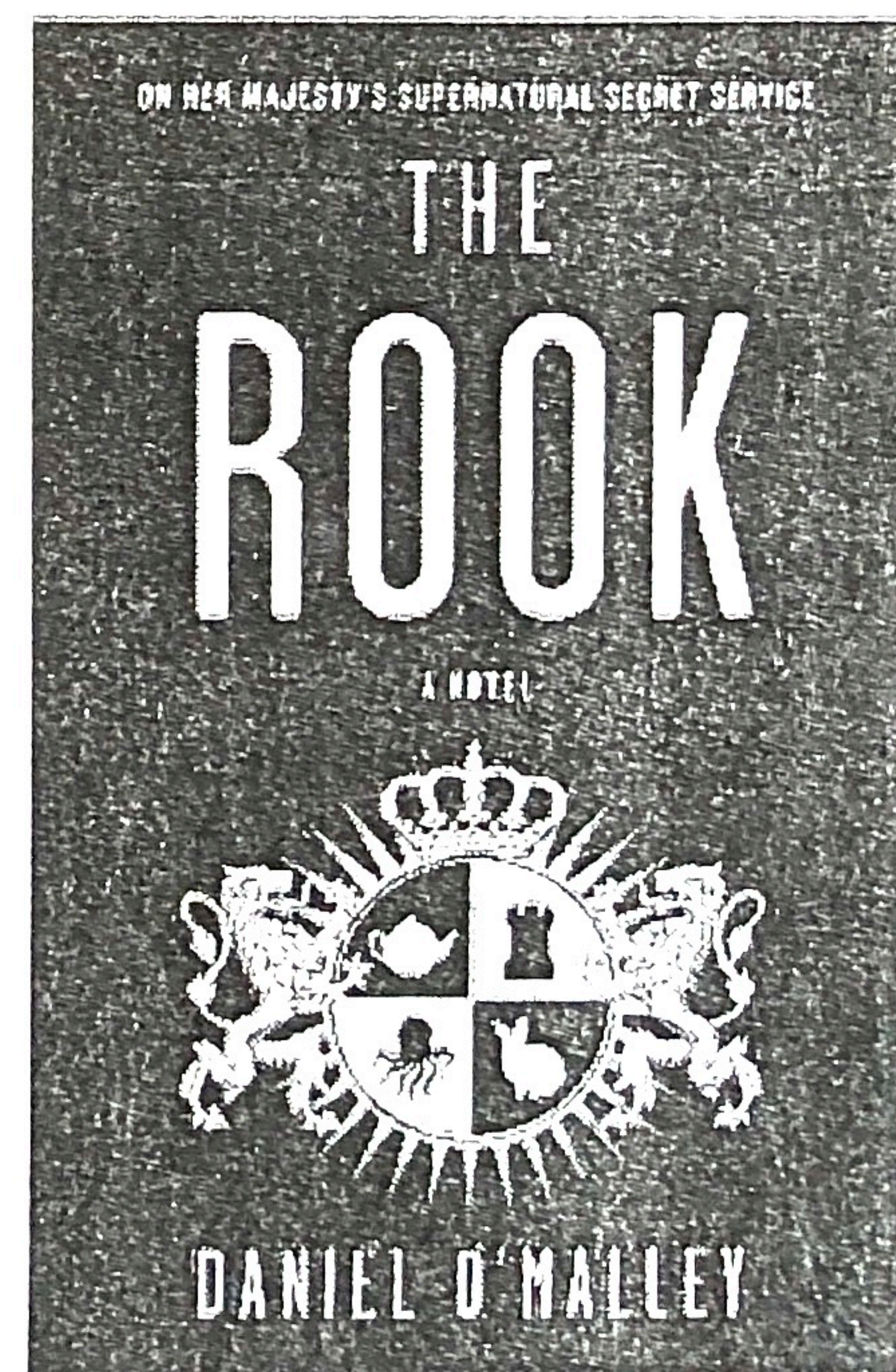
gests not going gently into that good night, but rather than raging, raging, Osborn’s mature main characters face their fate with Old World grace and good manners — and not a little bit of guilt — as both deal with “the selfishness of grief.”

### **Flight Behavior** By Barbara Kingsolver Harper, \$28.99

“Flight Behavior” deals with climate change in a clever, original way. As a young farm wife escapes for a tryst with her younger lover, she comes across what at first resembles a lake of fire. It turns out to be a gathering of millions of monarch butterflies, and leads veteran novelist Barbara Kingsolver, who was a scientist before she turned to writing novels, to address many complex issues we face today. As entertaining as it is thought-provoking.

### **The Bird Savivors** By William Cobb Unbridled Books, \$25.95

Birds in many cultures, including Mexican and American Indian, are considered a link between heaven and earth. In Texas writer William J. Cobb’s fierce



writer named Daniel O’Malley, lives up to its metaphysical endorsement, although it’s more “Men in Black” than Bond.

### **Waiting for Sunrise** By William Boyd Harper, \$25.99

Lysander Rief, a young British actor with an Old Scottish name, arrives in Vienna in 1913, to try and work out the kinks of a pesky sexual problem with a disciple of Sigmund Freud. So begins William