

nerd give that anything less than a **B?** —*Daniel Fierman*

THE WIDOW OF THE SOUTH

Robert Hicks
Debut Novel (*Warner*, \$24.95)



Winston Churchill might have had to rethink his conviction that history is written by the victors if he had ever tried to climb the cold mountain of Civil War fiction told from the perspective of the Confederacy. (They *did* lose, right?) But if the soil of a blood-soaked battlefield must be tilled yet again, at least Hicks brings some skill to his account of the aftermath of the 1864 Battle of Franklin, Tenn., in which nearly 9,000 lives were lost. *Widow* is told with multiple narrators—most notably the title character, a real woman who saw her home turned into a field hospital and willed herself into burying countless young men. Hicks occasionally succumbs to melodrama and his copious research can resonate too loudly, but for the most part, this is a sensitive account of an era that seems to fascinate readers ceaselessly. **B** —*Mark Harris*

WOUNDED

Percival Everett
Novel (*Graywolf*, \$23)



The Wyoming desert can be both beautiful and brutal, and Everett's ambitious story reflects its stark physical setting: Clearly inspired by the 1998 Matthew Shepard murder, it traces a small Western town's reaction to the grisly killing of a gay teen. *Wounded*

boasts touching moments and likable, work-worn cowboy characters—from John Hunt, the lonely black horse trainer who opens his home to his friend's estranged gay son, to his uncle Gus, the health-food-obsessed, elderly ex-con who cooks the meals on the ranch and shoots bad guys. Despite Everett's oddball sense of humor ("He's tenser than a Republican with a thought of his own"), *Wounded* is ultimately undone by slow pacing, overuse of ranching terminology, and heavy-handed treatment of themes like racial bigotry and homophobia. **B-** —*Channing Joseph*

HISTORY PLAY

Rodney Bolt
Fictional Bio (*Bloomsbury*, \$24.95)



If *Shakespeare in Love* had been a book penned by a precocious academic with a fondness for footnotes, it could've easily resembled this audacious work of scholarship, both factual and puckishly forged. *Play* takes the oft-argued theory that Elizabethan playwright Christopher "Kit" Marlowe was the true pen behind at least some of the Bard's works and transforms it into a sweeping mock biography. In bookish prose thick with detail, Bolt finds *King Lear* in possible childhood trips to Dover and *Richard III* in guilt over Kit's putative work as a spy for the crown—all under the thesis that cloak-and-dagger intrigue drove Kit at 29 to fake his own death and write as Shakespeare from exile in Europe. It's all in good fun, but odd to imagine the Bard as less a poet than a brilliantly constructed idea. **B** —*Adam B. Vary*

Best-Sellers



GAME, SET, 'MATCH'

Chicago-area author Susan Elizabeth Phillips' latest Windy City-set comedic romance, *Match Me if You Can*, debuts this week at No. 8 with 150,000 copies in print, while Anne Rivers Siddons' tender coming-of-age novel *Sweetwater Creek* paddles in at No. 9.

FICTION

		WEEKS ON LIST
1	HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE J.K. Rowling, <i>Scholastic</i> , \$29.99	5
2	LIFEGUARD James Patterson and Andrew Gross <i>Little, Brown</i> , \$26.95	5
3	THE DA VINCI CODE Dan Brown, <i>Doubleday</i> , \$24.95	124
4	THE HISTORIAN Elizabeth Kostova, <i>Little, Brown</i> , \$25.95	9
5	UNDOMESTIC GODDESS Sophie Kinsella, <i>Dial</i> , \$23	4
6	THE INTERRUPTION OF EVERYTHING Terry McMillan, <i>Viking</i> , \$25.95	4
7	NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN Cormac McCarthy, <i>Knopf</i> , \$24.95	4
8	MATCH ME IF YOU CAN Susan Elizabeth Phillips, <i>Morrow</i> , \$24.95	1
9	SWEETWATER CREEK Anne Rivers Siddons, <i>HarperCollins</i> , \$24.95	1
10	UNTIL I FIND YOU John Irving, <i>Random House</i> , \$27.95	5

NONFICTION

		WEEKS ON LIST
1	NATURAL CURES "THEY" DON'T WANT YOU TO KNOW ABOUT Kevin Trudeau, <i>Alliance Publishing</i> , \$29.95	9
2	THE FAIRTAX BOOK Neal Boortz and John Linder, <i>ReganBooks</i> , \$24.95	2
3	1776 David McCullough, <i>Simon & Schuster</i> , \$32	12
4	100 PEOPLE WHO ARE SCREWING UP AMERICA Bernard Goldberg, <i>HarperCollins</i> , \$25.95	6
5	FREAKONOMICS Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner, <i>Morrow</i> , \$25.95	18
6	YOUR BEST LIFE NOW Joel Osteen, <i>Warner Faith</i> , \$19.99	43
7	THE WORLD IS FLAT Thomas L. Friedman, <i>FSG</i> , \$27.50	19
8	THE PERRICONE PROMISE Nicholas Perricone, M.D., <i>Warner</i> , \$27.95	10
9	BLINK Malcolm Gladwell, <i>Little, Brown</i> , \$25.95	31
10	NEW RULES Bill Maher, <i>Rodale</i> , \$24.95	3

SOURCE: PUBLISHERS WEEKLY, WEEK OF AUG. 8-14, 2005

OPENING ACTS

"The grown-ups held an inquiry into how a child came to disappear, but they didn't name names like they do when children let grown-ups down. They talked about a catalogue of errors as if mistakes were something that turned up in the post and got paid for later." —*Opening of Clare Sambrook's novel HIDE & SEEK (Canongate, \$21)*

"But alcohol was New Amsterdam's fuel.... A 1648 ordinance complained that 'one full fourth of the City of New Amsterdam has been turned into taverns for the sale of brandy, tobacco and beer.'" —*From the first chapter of Mark Caldwell's history of NYC nightlife, NEW YORK NIGHT (Scribner, \$30)*