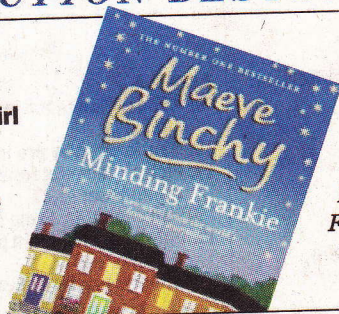
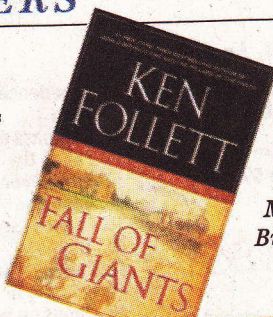


FICTION BESTSELLERS

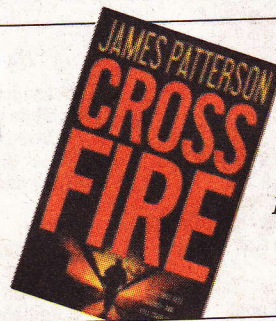
2
The Girl
Who
Played
with Fire
By Stieg
Larsson



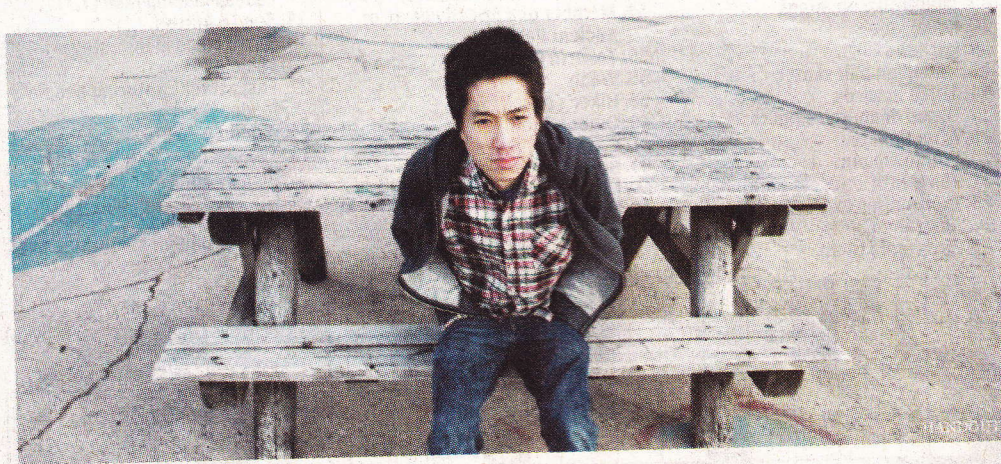
3
Fall of
Giants
By
Ken
Follett



4
Minding
Frankie
By
Maeve
Binchy



5
Cross Fire
By
James
Patterson



Revolutionary goad

Tao Lin irks the literary establishment, and his readers

BOOK REVIEW

Richard Yates

By Tao Lin
Melville House
171 pp; \$17.95

BY LYNSIE BOURGON

For a short novel, Tao Lin's *Richard Yates* has an extensive index chronicling every seemingly unimportant reference, from facial expressions (confident, neutral, worried) to foods eaten (flaxseed, Subway, ice cream). It's a bit of a gimmick — and so is Lin.

Minimalism is his style. He uses few adjectives, the dialogue is stiff. He doesn't use question marks. These stylistic tics define Lin more than his writing. With an aggressive Internet presence, he is a savvy online marketer. When his publisher, Brooklyn-based Mel-

ville House, provided a meagre \$1,000 advance for *Richard Yates*, Lin sold shares of his unwritten book to six investors.

The New York-based media blog Gawker has called Lin "perhaps the single most irritating person we've had to deal with," thanks to his persistent email spamming and online stunts.

Just last month, Lin set out to "monetize" his Twitter account by sending out 10 tweets, written in all-caps, that linked to the online lesbian magazine Autostraddle.

Of course, the bare bones of his new book is vintage Lin — naming your novel after a much more successful novelist is an attention grabber.

I emailed Lin to ask him about the title. Here's his response:

"The title *Richard Yates* is a low-level non-sequitur, similar to how if you type an email and then don't know what to type in the 'subject line'

of it you might type a near-random word or phrase, based vaguely on something within the email, feeling that after the other person has read your email they'll maybe understand how you felt toward the email, and the contents of the email, in terms of 'having to title it.'"

Plus, the characters in *Richard Yates* are fans of Richard Yates.

The follow-up to his cult-hit novella, *Shoplifting from American Apparel*, *Richard Yates* centres on two young lovers who go by the names Dakota Fanning and Haley Joel Osment. Both are referred to by their full names throughout the book. And, no, they're not the famous kid stars you're thinking of. Dakota Fanning is 16 and Haley Joel Osment is 22, and the book is about love and age and sex. The blurb on the back cover asks: "What constitutes illicit sex for a generation with no rules?"

But as an exploration of destructive love, Haley Joel Osment voices the true theme when he asks: "Now what."

Much of the narrative and dialogue is between the two and their plans for what comes next: when they'll meet, how they'll meet, what they'll do when they're together. And once they're together, the "now what" becomes an effort to save their relationship from its certain demise.

Dakota Fanning and Haley Joel Osment communicate mainly via Gmail chat, and their separation between New York City and New Jersey is the overarching and unsolvable problem in the relationship. But in true Lin style, the stress of a long-distance relationship is reduced to a throw-away sentence:

"Haley Joel Osment said, 'Soon we won't talk anymore. Life is terrible.'"

But as the book unfolds, it's easy to regard the painfully blunt discussion as an astute rendering of young love. The conversations make no sense and are filled with small inside jokes; they'll talk about anything from eating disorders to moving in together in quick missives that don't sound real. But in a world of relationships and Gmail chat, that is authentic.

Lin is the ultimate hipster, and you'll hate and love him for it. His work is so minimalist and so literal, it can make for uncomfortable reading. You want to stop reading it, but you also want to like it, you want to be part of the club that understands it. Maybe you want him to write a sentence that includes you — just like he did for Richard Yates.

Weekend Post