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# 'White on White' is about how we tell each other's stories

It reveals insights to family, love and friendship

By CORY OLDWEILER  
STAR TRIBUNE

In her 2019 debut, "Walking on the Ceiling," Aysegül Savas deftly probed the barriers inherent to human relationships, particularly how they are revealed when we try to inhabit another person's story.

The novel, meted out in bite-sized chapters, centers on the connections that Nunu, a young woman studying literature in Paris, has with an older male author and with her mother. The platonic friendship with the author dives into issues of appropriation, artistic inspiration and public versus private personas.

The mother-daughter relationship is more freighted and, for Nunu, more difficult to convey, a difficulty starkly revealed in a late chapter that reads, in its entirety: "I'm trying to say that I've tried to tell a story about her many times. But none have resembled my mother."

**CONFESSIONAL NOVEL**

Savas' luxuriantly meditative new novel, "White on White," again zeroes in on these elemental interpersonal

themes. And perhaps with an eye to Nunu's inability to render her mother, Savas has written a confessional novel where a painter named Agnes tells her own story, albeit indirectly, by spilling her past cares and current fears to the book's unnamed narrator, who passes them on to the reader with no filter and few judgments.

This chronicler of Agnes' life is a young woman, closer in age to Agnes' children than to Agnes herself, writing her graduate thesis on medieval attitudes toward nudity, as revealed through Gothic artworks. She has earned a yearlong fellowship to an unsuspected city — likely in Italy or Spain, given the area's geography and relevant cathedrals — and has rented a flat owned by Agnes and her husband.

After two months, Agnes comes to town to work in her art studio on the flat's upper floor. The narrator finds Agnes' presence magnetic as the two discuss art, both Agnes' paintings and the sculptures the narrator is researching. Agnes extends her stay and begins to share more personal stories, both quotidian and intimate, covering everything from how often she thought about a painting that hung in her childhood home to the first time she has sex — with an art school instructor, an experience she saw dispassionately as "a

task, a destination she'd set her mind on."

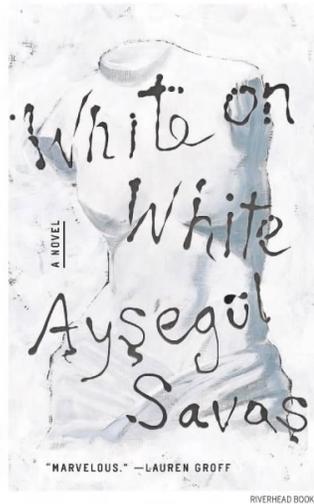
At first, the narrator wonders at Agnes' ever-lengthening separation from her husband, but soon she grows more concerned with finding her own separation from the woman. For her part, Agnes is keenly aware of her need for companionship from their first outing, when she says, "I seem to be starved for conversation. I'm going on and on."

**TOUCH AND NARRATIVE**

The narrator's research into the historic ties between touch and narrative is almost unwittingly fueled by Agnes' compulsion to bare herself metaphorically. While we see the "physical aspect" of nakedness the same as it has been for centuries, our current "perception of being unclothed might hold entirely different meanings, like a thin film obscuring the subject from view."

The many correlations between that "thin film" and the "plessness" that Agnes, so desperate to have someone slip inside her skin and understand her, make Savas' lyrically spare gem shimmer with richly complex insights on communication, family, love and friendship.

"White on White" by Aysegül Savas; Riverhead Books (192 pages, \$26)



"White on White," by Aysegül Savas

**Wait! Wait!**  
Laugh with the weekly quiz show *Wait Wait... Don't Tell Me!* Saturdays at 11am & 8pm on 90.1 FM WCGU **W** **C** **G** **U**

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**SIAM** **CARES** **JULIE**  
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**ELOPHER** **SHUN** **ORR**  
**PADA** **SOLAR** **LARK**  
**AMON** **COO** **FLIE**  
**LOISE** **NEWY** **DAITD**

**JANRIC CLASSIC SUDOKU**

2	1	8	3	9				
3		7			2	1		
6	2			5	8			
4		9						
1	7	4			8			
9	2			8	5			
6	7		1				2	
	8	7	2		1	6		

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**MARMADUKE** By Brad Anderson

**Rating: GOLD**  
Fill in the blank cells using numbers 1 to 9. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and 3x3 block. Use logic and the process of elimination to solve the puzzle. The difficulty level ranges from Bronze (easiest) to Silver (medium) to Gold (hardest).

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"He didn't stay on his hind end of the couch."

**WEDNESDAY CROSSWORD** EDITED BY STANLEY NEWMAN

**GET OUTTA HERE!** By Mark McClain

**ACROSS**

- 1 Common grad-student job
- 6 Bleach holders
- 10 Admin. address
- 15 Peace Prize city
- 16 Words on some jackets
- 17 Bank customers: Abbr.
- 18 Branch of Islam
- 19 Old Testament prophet
- 20 Engage in idle chatter
- 23 Cook of Apple Yonder yacht
- 24 Wherein the world is flat
- 27 Hounded DC-based network
- 32 State of anger
- 33 Loan document stat.
- 34 Needle hole
- 35 "I'll pick that up!"
- 36 Popular diner breakfast
- 40 Elixir
- 41 Wood used in wineries
- 42 Cable service add-on
- 43 Gehring of baseball
- 44 Barbecue by-product
- 45 Falls to be alert
- 48 Shareholder
- 50 Pool tool
- 51 \_\_\_ Baba
- 53 Far from logical

**DOWN**

- 2 Young rascal
- 3 Pugal Sound city of rhyes
- 5 What's left over
- 6 Kidded around
- 7 Bailpark
- 8 Smooth-talking heights
- 10 Red as \_\_\_
- 11 Torrid
- 12 Pitchers' woes
- 13 Bag checking agency
- 21 Bottle-brand corporals
- 22 Dumbo's wing
- 26 Get the point
- 28 Attire
- 29 Admissions
- 30 "Saves the World" scientist
- 31 Merchant
- 34 Deer cousin
- 35 Fearsome employer
- 36 Winter footwear
- 37 Advisory boards
- 38 Scrooge's soot
- 39 Festival precursor
- 40 \_\_\_mc replay
- 44 Creative skill
- 45 Filled in (for)
- 46 Sort of sandwich
- 47 Walk-busing tool
- 49 Slacks off
- 50 Girder lifter
- 52 "Any \_\_\_?"
- 54 Siphons off
- 55 Niagara Falls feeder
- 56 Doesn't stall
- 57 Dairy's alternative
- 58 Channel for film buffs

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**LOS ANGELES TIMES DAILY CROSSWORD** EDITED BY RICH NORRIS AND JOYCE LEWIS

**ACROSS**

- 1 Some game pieces
- 5 Long-range nuke
- 9 Like horses
- 14 Palm whose oil is used in cosmetics
- 15 David Copperfield wife
- 16 Barely with "by"
- 17 Blades for trimming blades
- 19 Fulle
- 20 Channel that shows college games
- 21 Banquet offering
- 23 Any ship
- 24 Shine, in adspk
- 27 Evasive
- 28 Development that ended much development
- 34 Disorientant brand since 1889
- 35 Nipper
- 36 Collapsed
- 39 Bell invention with a bell
- 42 Farm mom
- 44 Unaccustomed to club used at a club
- 52 Centuries-old discipline
- 53 Pod opening
- 54 Japanese amazement (at)
- 57 Call discs on, with "r"
- 61 1736 writer of a seminal paper on graph theory
- 63 From an earlier time
- 64 Wheels for carrying wheels
- 67 Setting for a Tony-winning Miller play
- 68 Persia, now
- 69 "Check this out!"
- 70 Serously weaken
- 71 Bird, in a way
- 72 Eye ailment

**DOWN**

- 1 Losses color
- 2 PayPal payment, e.g.
- 3 Rubbernecked
- 4 Fein
- 5 "What will \_\_\_ now?"
- 6 Intimidate
- 7 Two-time Cy Young Award winner
- 8 Show
- 9 Recurred at regular intervals
- 10 Alaska
- 11 Proper
- 12 Latin infinitive
- 13 Big game
- 18 Wet weather word
- 22 Holiday mo.
- 25 Speak like
- 26 Texter's "Then again ..."
- 29 Breed
- 30 One way to sing
- 31 Acid Rain
- 32 Copak classic
- 33 Parrot
- 36 Brit
- 37 "Aaah!" prince
- 38 After expenses
- 40 Colorful salamander
- 41 Big-mouthed one that can hold its wine?
- 42 Seas
- 45 Eye word
- 47 Recurred at regular intervals
- 48 Loving request
- 49 "Hometown Proud"
- 50 Job it test
- 51 Jon
- 55 Tiny
- 56 Minoaur's home
- 57 Get rid of corner
- 58 Handy around the
- 59 Risk-taker's acronym
- 60 Actress Sorvino
- 62 FedEx rival
- 65 Plan (out)
- 66 "A Chorus Line" number

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