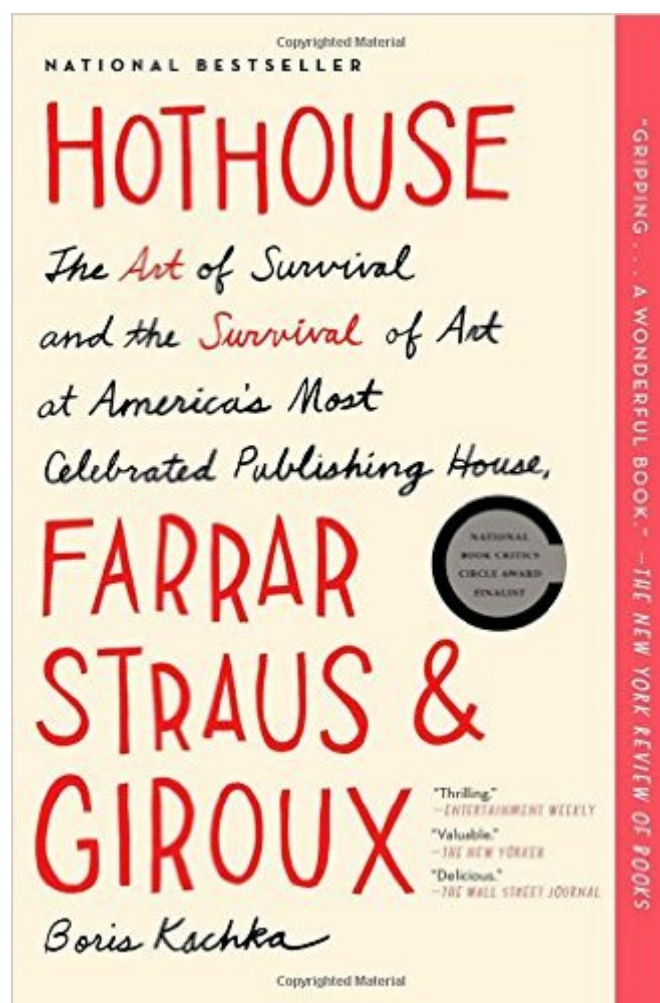


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Hothouse: The Art Of Survival And The Survival Of Art At America's Most Celebrated Publishing House, Farrar, Straus, And Giroux



Synopsis

A national bestseller, *Hothouse* is a "wonderful" (New York Review of Books), "valuable" (The New Yorker), cultural history, "a ripping read about the eminent publishing house Farrar, Straus & Giroux" (The Boston Globe). Farrar, Straus & Giroux is arguably the most influential publishing house of the modern era. Home to an unrivaled twenty-five Nobel Prize winners and generation-defining authors like Tom Wolfe, Joan Didion, Philip Roth, and Jonathan Franzen, it's a cultural institution whose importance approaches that of The New York Times. But FSG is no ivory tower—and its untold story is as engrossing as many of the great novels it has published. Boris Kachka reveals the era and the city that built FSG through the stories of two men: founder-owner Roger Straus, the black sheep of his German-Jewish family, and the reticent, closeted editor Robert Giroux, who rose from working-class New Jersey to discover the novelists and poets who helped define American culture. Giroux became one of T.S. Eliot's best friends and played caretaker to manic-depressive geniuses like Robert Lowell, John Berryman, and Jack Kerouac. Straus, the showman, made Susan Sontag a star, kept Edmund Wilson out of prison, and turned Isaac Bashevis Singer into a Nobelist. After giving us a fresh perspective on the postwar authors we thought we knew, Kachka exposes how elite publishing works today. He gets inside the editorial meetings where writers' fates are decided; he captures the adrenaline rush of bidding wars for top talent; and he lifts the lid on the high-stakes pursuit of that rarest commodity, public attention—including a fly-on-the-wall account of the confrontation between Oprah Winfrey and Jonathan Franzen. *Hothouse* is the product of five years of research and nearly 200 interviews by a veteran New York magazine writer. It shares "a thrilling look at the heyday of the publishing industry" (>) and illuminates the vital intellectual center of the American Century.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

HOTHOUSE, by Boris Kachka. I wasn't sure if I'd like this book, an account of the history of one of the most prestigious publishing houses in America, Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, in its many names and guises over the years. But I did like it; in fact I liked it a lot. Because I am a booklover, and this is a book just made for people like me. There are anecdotes and stories galore here, and I knew right away I'd have fun with this book, and began immediately jotting down the names of books and authors I've known of for years, but still haven't read. Now I have a stronger resolve to read folks like Jean Stafford and Robert Lowell, and maybe I'll even finally give *On the Road: The Original Scroll* (Penguin Classics Deluxe Edition) another try. And Eileen Simpson's memoir, *Poets in Their Youth: A Memoir*, sounds delicious. Sontag? I probably still wouldn't understand her stuff, but then I did enjoy reading *Sempre Susan: A Memoir of Susan Sontag*, Sigrid Nunez's memoir of her time with Sontag, a book cited a couple times here, as Kachka has much to say about the close relationship Sontag enjoyed with publisher Roger Straus. And it brought back so many fond memories of FSG authors I have read, both recently and long ago - Flannery O'Connor, Philip Roth, Thomas Merton, Nelson Algren, Solzhenitsyn, and others.

From start to finish, "Hothouse" is a fun, engaging, almost mesmerizing read. This book is part history, part Toto pulling back the curtain on the inner workings of an esteemed publishing house, part "The Devil Wears Prada" grafted onto the New York publishing scene, and part New Orleans style jazz funeral for that once independent house of legends and lovers of the written word. With the conglomerate-corporatization and hyper-commercialization of the New York publishers that began in earnest a quarter of a century or so ago, and the attendant, insipid primacy of the bottom line that has since so woefully cast its dark shadow on what was once a precious harbor of hope for aspiring authors, we may never again see the kind of nurturing of serious talent that was once upon a time the true bottom line of places like Farrar, Straus, and Giroux. This book was particularly enlightening on a personal level since I submitted a manuscript years ago to someone who was then barely known but is now one of the most powerful literary agents in the country (one of his authors, like FS&G's Jonathan Franzen, had his novel selected by Oprah for her book club). He called me up the morning after receiving it, said he had stayed up almost all night reading my novel,

and not only told me that he loved my book but also paid me one of the kindest compliments I have ever received, telling me that I reminded him of, and was as good of a writer as, Pat Conroy. But although he tried for two years to get a publisher to take my novel, he could not do so despite his considerable talents.

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