

*OUTPOST*  
19  
PROVOCATIVE  
READING

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Anastasia Kuehn  
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Independent Press Report

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## Fact Sheet

**Email:** [jon@outpost19.com](mailto:jon@outpost19.com)

**Website:** [www.outpost19.com](http://www.outpost19.com)

**Founded:** 2009

**Founders:** Jon Roemer, Robert Schirmer

**Focus/Goal:** Outpost 19 is out to publish “provocative reading,” whether it’s fiction, essays or memoirs. They are searching for books that stand out from the rest of the pack. Books that offer an “artful argument. The story you don’t want to stop.”

**Description:** Outpost 19 is an independent publisher based in San Francisco and New York City.

**Activity:** Outpost 19 publishes ten to twelve titles per year.

**Submissions:** Unsolicited and simultaneous submissions are both accepted. Through their [submission manager](#), provide an overview/description of the project, and also include a short biography. List any previous projects, in print or other media. Submit the first several pages or the whole manuscript.

**Report Time:** Within one to two months.

**Recent Publications & Authors:** *Commercial Fiction* by Dave Housley, *Understudies* by Ravi Mangla, *Dark March: Stories For When the Rest of the World is Asleep* by Colin Fleming

**Recent Reviews By:** *The Rumpus*, *The Millions*, *3AM Magazine*, *The Boston Globe*

## Why Outpost 19?

At the start of the market report assignment, I was definitely more drawn to the idea of an indie press over a magazine. Over the course of the semester we had covered so many magazines through our presentations that I wanted to get another view of the publishing industry from someone running an actual house that printed full-length novels. Next, I sat down at my bookshelf and looked at every book and their respectful publishers. One of the only books I had from a small press was *Something Pretty, Something Beautiful* by Eric Barnes. A few months back it was a notable bestseller on *Goodreads*. I read it recently, so the characters and plot were fresh in my mind and it all still seemed very real. The voice of the book was compelling, and much different than what I'm used to reading, so I thought I would explore the press as a whole, and what it valued most in a manuscript.

## **Interview With Editor Jon Roemer**

Anastasia Kuehn: How did your literature and fiction writing studies at Northwestern ignite your interest in choosing a career in publishing?

Jon Roemer: While my time at Northwestern was limited to literature studies and fiction writing, and no publishing courses were involved, the faculty still taught me to think critically while reading. That's a habit that has come in handy in publishing.

AK: You and your colleague both work from different cities. Since it is long-distance, how do you split up the work to successfully manage your business?

JR: We've relied on e-mail and a few cloud-based services. Most of our shared tasks have been editorial, so that has been fairly easy to manage over e-mail. In addition to editing, I also handle our relationships with vendors and distributors, so that streamlines the business-end of things.

AK: On the first read of a manuscript, what are the things you look for to prove that the story has promise?

JR: I start reading submissions as I would any book. I'm just looking to be intrigued as a reader. My interests lean toward writing that uses language in interesting ways. If I'm intrigued by the story and how it's told, then I'll look at it again as a publisher and weigh if it make sense for our list.

AK: After you take on a project, how involved is the author during the publishing process?

JR: It depends on the author, but I prefer them to be very involved. I ask for their feedback from editing through packaging, and often look to their involvement to boost sales.

AK: Your press publishes books that cover a wide range of genres and voices. How does the editing and marketing of all the books differ?

JR: In editing, I try to understand what a writer has set out to do -- his or her own criteria -- and I do my best to make sure the work matches those goals. In marketing, promotion plans are tailored to fit the prospective readership. Most authors benefit from a regional focus. Some books can be helped by targeting specific reviews.

AK: I've read Eric Barnes' *Something Pretty, Something Beautiful*. The voice and sentence structure is very unique in its length. Was that something that was always present in the writing, or did that evolve over the course of the edits?

JR: For me, the voice in *Something Pretty, Something Beautiful* is enormously seductive, especially with so much violence at hand. I think that's a masterful thing, presenting so much ugliness inside such lyrical sentences. And as the narrative moves between different characters' perspectives, Eric handles those divisions really well, too. Eric's original manuscript arrived with all those elements. I couldn't begin to insert them as an editor. Overall I did very little editing. Thanks, too, for reading Eric's book. He has a few books under his belt and none of them are the same.

AK: How many books, on average, do you publish in a year? And how much time is devoted to each book?

JR: Outpost19 publishes ten to twelve books per year. But it's impossible to estimate how much time is devoted to each. Some manuscripts require very time-intensive editing, while others are ready to go. Given the kind of work we publish, we definitely don't rush editing and try to work with the author on a timeframe for revisions. Alongside that process, sometimes the cover art is a snap, while other authors need to look a lot of options before they'll sign off. And on the promotion side, some want to be active and ask for a lot of help, and others take a more passive role. Overall, the time spent on the book depends on the author, the book and its market.

AK: How many copies of a book are printed in a first run, and is that number higher or lower depending upon the genre?

JR: Print runs vary, depending on the projected audience, and I'll often use a mix of short runs and on-demand services.

AK: How do you decide what amount of books in a given run are made available to each retailer, such as Amazon, Barnes and Noble, etc.?

JR: I can ballpark it based on prior sales, but I also rely on my distributors to advise me. For example, Small Press Distribution tells me in advance how many copies they'd like to stock.

**AK:** I noticed that you sell e-books as well as regular print books. Is there a different reasoning as to which books get chosen to be e-books v. print? How do their sales numbers compare to the print books?

**JR:** A few of our titles are e-book versions of work originally published only in print. In those cases, the author retained the digital rights from the original publisher and asked Outpost19 to produce them as e-books. Some books work best as e-books, like a book on digital culture or a blog adaptation or work with a really limited audience. When Outpost19 offers a book in both print and digital formats, e-book sales can range between 10% to 30% of print sales.

**Book Review :***Something Pretty, Something Beautiful*

Eric Barnes

[Outpost 19, 2013. 261 pages, paperback.]

\$16.00

Eric Barnes' sophomore novel *Something Pretty, Something Beautiful* is a story about five rebellious teenage boys growing up in Tacoma, Washington in the present day. They live on the fringe, and Barnes winds a provocative narrative of the hardships they cause one another; and as the risks they take start to get increasingly more brutal, violence breaks out in their angst-fueled youth.

The story starts off with twenty-one year-old Brian returning to Tacoma from his new home in Wyoming for the first time in three years. Revisiting the sheds by the tide flats where he and his friends threw parties, he is uncomfortable coming home and soon we discover why: there is a resounding kind of power that Tacoma, and his friends, hold over him. The story stays in Bryan's first person point of view for the entirety of the novel, but at times we are given access to the other characters' thoughts. We learn that four of the boys are completely at the mercy of the oldest one. Brian, Teddy, Coe, and Kyle follow their leader, Will Wilson, doing whatever he says, whenever he says. Whether that be driving down the Shuster Parkway at 125 miles per hour, or breaking into homes in wealthy Old Town in the middle of the night, or bringing girls to Brian's basement and pantsing them. Will Wilson's influence is what holds the group together, but their hesitancy and fear is constantly palpable.

This isn't merely a story of these five boys and their world in Tacoma, it's a meditation of something larger. It's a case study of every misguided teen boy who has ever fallen victim to peer pressure, and became addicted to the freedom of rebellion. Thematically, it calls to mind *Perks of Being a Wallflower* and *December Boys*, which are all about groups of teens who don't seem to quite fit in with the rest of their peers, and become totally dependent on one another to get them through their daily lives.

The uncontrollable ecstasy and fear the boys are feeling is manifested in the rambling, heightened descriptions of the narrator. "Teddy was ahead of me as we ran down the sloping front yard, stepping between rose bushes and junipers, what sounded like three cops behind us, night sticks and walkie-talkies and guns all creaking..." And as they explore deeper and darker



crimes, near-death experiences, the sentences get longer, the voice more longwinded, and commas become almost non-existent.

After being informed that Brian is the narrator it clears up and helps define the relationships between the boys. And one thing is made clear early on, the only boy not afraid of Will Wilson is Kyle, and he pays dearly for that bravery. By the end the point of view is a really close to Brian, an almost claustrophobic first person, which ratchets up the tension. There is no break. Brian becomes unreliable. For the majority of his narration, he is in an alcohol and drug-induced haze that alters his perception and response to events. Ultimately, the boys' friendship goes into a downward spiral when Kyle starts questioning him, and begins formulating a plan about taking Brian up to Alaska to go spend time on his father's fishing boat. The boys fight, ultimately ending up with Kyle pushing Will off of an interstate bridge. And soon after, Will takes them all for one last 125 mph joyride, crashing, and killing everyone but Brian.

This novel is successful at capturing the essence of teen boys in the throes of a rebellion. There's a right amount of action and teen angst, with little gems of emotional depth and fear that make you keep reading, and keep up with the pace of it all.