

NOVEL GAZING

The lit world's new It girls are set to turn critical buzz and international backgrounds into publishing pay dirt. BY TEDDY WAYNE

Ever since subcontinental lit-babe Jhumpa Lahiri spun her Bengali background and masters from Boston University into a Pulitzer Prize-winning mega-hit, the formula for a successful first book seemed clear: Be young, female, worldly, and hot. But by the time the umpteenth tome about cultural displacement, intergenerational turmoil, love that knows no borders, and piquant spices turned up on *Oprah*, the trend had officially Jhumpa'd the shark.

So the girls upped their game. This year, Ceridwen Dovey, Sophie Gee, Angela Hur, Porochista Khakpour, and Dalia Sofer, debut novelists all, have arrived on the scene with works that are thoughtful, idiosyncratic, and decidedly highbrow, despite their authors' international pedigrees and unimpeachable sex appeal. Meet the latest progenitors of the Great (Naturalized) American Novel.

△ Sophie Gee

33, *The Scandal of the Season* (Scribner)

The Aussie author and Princeton assistant professor delivers a spirited tale of bad manners, parlor tricks, and sex in 18th-century London.

Sonia Rykiel dress. Chanel sandals. H&M belt, bangles, and tights.

▷ Porochista Khakpour

29, *Sons and Other Flammable Objects* (Grove Press)

The Tehran refugee's darkly comic novel concerns the neuroses of an Iranian father in post-9/11 New York, but you don't have to know the difference between *khoresht* and *khak sheer* to enjoy it.

MariaMarie gown. Bruno Magli shoes. Vintage bracelet from Screaming Mimi's.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ERIC MCNAITT
STYLING BY KAREN LEVITT/KRAMER + KRAMER

▽ Angela Mi Young Hur

27, *The Queens of K-Town* (MacAdam/Cage)
Though her coming-of-age tale about a fragile, suicidal Korean girl takes place in Manhattan, Hur reins in the customary hand-wringing about immigrant ennui. As she puts it, "It's not about you, white man."

Kara Janx skirt, worn as dress. Bruno Magli pumps. Chanel bangle. H&M tights.

◁ Ceridwen Dovey

26, *Blood Kin* (Viking)
The Harvard-educated South African's political fable about a coup in a fictional country is a chilling study of power. It should give many in the U.S. government pause, provided they find time between illegal wiretapping shifts to read it.

Rafael Lopez dress. Bruno Magli pumps. H&M bangles. Vintage belt from Screaming Mimi's.

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▽ Dalia Sofer

25, *The Septembers of Shiraz* (Ecco)
Sofer's prose can be intoxicating, though red wine has nothing to do with it. The Iranian refugee-cum-New Yorker loosely based her book on her father's imprisonment in Tehran during the Revolution.

Saint & Bide dress. Marc bustier. Chanel shoes and belt. H&M tights.