

# Post Civil-War love story is slow

BY TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER  
FOR THE CHRONICLE

Editor's note: March is National Women's History Month.

After a long day, nothing makes you feel better — especially when you pair soft tunes with hot bath and solitude. You might even add a glass of something tasty and a novel you've been dying to read. But in the new book "Balm" by Dolen Perkins-Valdez, the only thing that soothes is forgiveness and restitution.

Moving to Chicago had never been part of Sadie's plan.

She'd supposed, instead, that she'd live in Pennsylvania after the Civil War ended, and go on with her life as though there was never any war. Her parents had seen things differently, however: she was hastily married to a wealthy man she barely knew because it was safer that way. Sam purchased a house in Chicago, furnished it, and hired staff in anticipation of having a wife to display; Sadie might have even fallen in love with him, had he not been killed in a train accident.

She couldn't mourn; she barely knew Sam, which made the staff uncomfortable. As they deserted her, Sadie knew she needed a maid. The voice in her head — an insistent voice

that said he was a soldier once — sent her to Madge.

Born to a woman who was more interested in being a root doctor than in being a mother, Madge left her Tennessee home as a teenager — unloved by her Mama but knowing how to use plants and seeds to heal. She couldn't say she



Perkins-Valdez

liked working for Sadie, but assisting with séances left Madge with plenty of time to build her apothecary and a little business. It also gave her guilty time to spend with Hemp Harrison, who said he was a married man.

Long before the day when raggedy Rebel soldiers came down the plantation road looking for trouble, Hemp had fallen for Annie, and they married. Though he'd done something unthinkable, he loved her so much; after she was sold away in chains, he vowed to find her and make things right. With the War over, it was said that "millions" of former

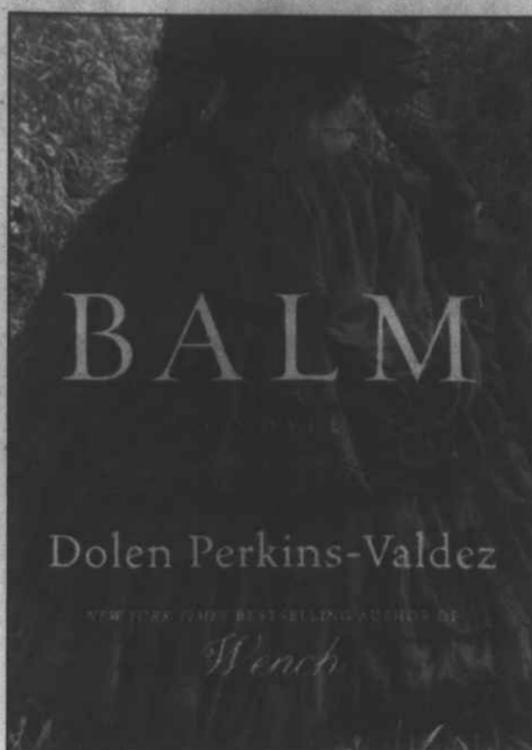
slaves had somehow landed in Chicago but was Annie among them?

Was it right to move on without her? Set during America's spiritualist movement of the post-Civil War years, "Balm" is a bit of surprise: it's not exactly a love story, not exactly a ghost story, not exactly a novel of amends. It's closer to all three, and that only works sometimes.

While it's true that author Dolen Perkins-Valdez writes with extraordinary beauty, those flowingly gorgeous words can slow the story down, which often mars the romantic aspect of it. I enjoyed the ghostly storyline — I found it interesting and accurate, but the spirit's brother annoyed me beyond all reason and left me feeling restless.

This isn't a terrible book, no. It's slow, but it has three great main characters going for it and the overall authenticity will make historical novel fans happy. But if you're looking for something snappier and with more finality, "Balm" just won't do it for you.

Terri Schlichenmeyer has been reading since she was 3 years old and she never goes anywhere without a book. She lives on a hill in Wisconsin with two dogs and 14,000 books.



"Balm: A Novel" by Dolen Perkins-Valdez  
c.2015, Amistad  
\$25.99 / \$31.99 Canada  
273 pages

## THE PEOPLE'S CLINIC

# Learn about your colorectal cancer risk

MAYA ANGELOU CENTER  
FOR HEALTH EQUITY  
SPECIAL TO  
THE CHRONICLE

Colorectal cancer (CRC) is the third most common cancer found in adults. The American Cancer Society (ACS) estimates that more than 134,000 new cases of CRC will be diagnosed in 2016, and approximately 50,000 people will die from the disease. In North Carolina, African-Americans accounted for nearly 25 percent of CRC deaths in 2014. African-Americans are 20 percent more likely to be diagnosed with CRC and 45 percent more likely to die from the disease compared to whites. African-Americans are also more likely to be diagnosed at later stages compared to whites.

The risk of developing colorectal cancer increases with age. In fact, more than 90 percent of colorectal cancer cases occur in persons aged 50 years or older.

CRC is one of the most common types of cancer diagnosed; however, the number of people developing and dying from colorectal cancer has been decreasing each year. This decrease is largely due to successful screening tests that allow for the discovery and removal of pre-cancerous growths (polyps) before they turn into cancer. Early detection and treatment can lead to improved medical outcomes.

The colon and rectum are part of the digestive system (often called gas-

trointestinal, or GI, system) Colorectal cancer usually develops slowly over a period of years from the cells lining the inside of the colon and rectum. Risk factors that contribute to the development of colorectal cancer include:

- \*Family history of colorectal cancer or polyps, inflammatory bowel disease, or certain hereditary diseases

- \*Personal history of inflammatory bowel disease

- \*Age 50 years old or greater

- \*Racial and Ethnic background — African-Americans who have these risk factors, especially those who are age 50 or older, are at an even greater risk of developing colorectal cancer.

- \*Lifestyle factors such as lack of exercise, poor diet, obesity, and alcohol and tobacco use contribute to an increased risk of CRC.

- \*People with Type 2 Diabetes have an increased risk of developing CRC

Routine screening for colorectal cancer is crucial for early detection. The ACS recommends that, beginning at age 50, both men and women have a yearly stool blood test (a test to find small amounts of hidden blood in the stool), plus one of the following exams:

- \*Flexible sigmoidoscopy (a procedure that allows the doctor to look at the inside of the rectum and part of the colon) every 5 years.

- \*Double contrast barium enema (a series of X-rays of the colon and rec-

tum which are taken after the patient is given a barium dye enema followed by an injection of air into the lower bowel) every 5 years.

- \*Colonoscopy (a procedure that allows the doctor to look at the inside of the rectum and colon) every 10 years.

If you have a family history of colorectal cancer, you may need to be screened at a younger age.

You should also see a physician immediately if you have any of the following symptoms:

- \*Change in bowel habits such as diarrhea, constipation, or narrowing of the stool that lasts for more than a few days

- \*Feeling of needing to have a bowel movement that doesn't go away after doing so

- \*Bleeding from the rec-

tum or blood in the stool

- \*Cramping or steady stomach pain

- \*Unexplained weakness, fatigue and/or weight loss

Having these symptoms does not necessarily mean that you have cancer, but you should be evaluated to be sure. Early detection through standard screening tests greatly improves the likelihood

that it will be cured.

For more information, see the American Cancer Society's website at [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov). For more information about the Maya Angelou Center for Health Equity or local resources in your area, please visit our website: [www.wakehealth.edu/MA-CHE](http://www.wakehealth.edu/MA-CHE) or call us toll-free at 1-877-530-1824.

## Forsyth County focusing on underage drinking prevention

SPECIAL TO  
THE CHRONICLE

Law enforcement agencies, the ABC Commission, DMV License and Theft, local ABC Boards and prevention coalitions are increasing their focus on preventing underage drinking.

A crucial part of this intensified focus includes providing training programs to further educate ABC permit holders on proper alcohol sales.

Recently, sellers and servers in the greater Triad area participated in two of these training seminars hosted by the N.C. ABC Commission and the Coalition for Drug Abuse Prevention.

During the training, participants learned how to spot fake IDs and eliminate

sales to underage and intoxicated drinkers.

These training seminars align with the goal of the N.C. ABC Commission's Talk It Out Campaign, a statewide initiative targeting underage drinking in North Carolina.

"Underage drinking has had an enormous impact across the state. And if we're going to sell alcohol in North Carolina, we have a responsibility to address the underage drinking problem," said Jim Gardner, chairman of the N.C. ABC Commission. Following these training seminars, North Carolina Alcohol Law Enforcement (ALE) and local law enforcement in Forsyth County may intensify enforcement efforts. For more information visit, <http://www.talkitoutnc.org>.



NORTHWEST CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTERS

# KEEP CALM IT'S 2016 SUMMER Day Camp

JUNE 13 - AUGUST 19  
Monday - Friday • 7:30 am - 6:00 pm  
\$125 per week

"Providing quality childcare for tomorrow's leaders, since 1970!"

Dates may vary depending on program location  
NWDC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization



NORTHWEST CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTERS

[www.mudpiesnc.org](http://www.mudpiesnc.org)

### Locations

**MudPies Coliseum**  
2530 Pittsburgh Avenue  
Winston-Salem, NC 27105  
336.602.1746  
[MudPiesColiseum@nwcdc.org](mailto:MudPiesColiseum@nwcdc.org)

**MudPies Downtown East**  
251 East 7th Street  
Winston-Salem, NC 27101  
336.448.0341  
[MudPiesDTE@nwcdc.org](mailto:MudPiesDTE@nwcdc.org)

**MudPies King**  
621 East King Street  
King, NC 27201  
336.983.9698  
[MudPiesKing@nwcdc.org](mailto:MudPiesKing@nwcdc.org)

**MudPies Mocksville**  
622 North Main Street  
Mocksville, NC 27028  
336.751.5298  
[MudPiesMocksville@nwcdc.org](mailto:MudPiesMocksville@nwcdc.org)

AGES 6-10

SPACE IS LIMITED

You may pick up your registration forms at either of our locations, or print the registration form from our website ([http://www.mudpiesnc.org/parents\\_intake\\_form.asp](http://www.mudpiesnc.org/parents_intake_form.asp)).