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FINAL PROJECT

JUDGING A BOOK BY ITS COVER:  
REDESIGNING THE COVER OF *HEROINES OF THE CRUSADES*

CAITLIN DOUGHERTY  
ARH 247: ART AND HISTORY OF THE BOOK

SPRING 2017  
PROFESSOR JOSEPH BLACK

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# INTRODUCTION

The idea for this project came to me when I was searching the stacks on the fourth floor of Neilson Library for a late nineteenth century book on archaeology. I had not yet explored this floor of the library, and was surprised at the number of incredibly old books there. When I was ready to check out the book, I discovered it did not have a working barcode; an inspection of the borrowing card revealed its most recent check-out date was 1998. I resolved myself to come back to this floor for my final project for ARH 247.

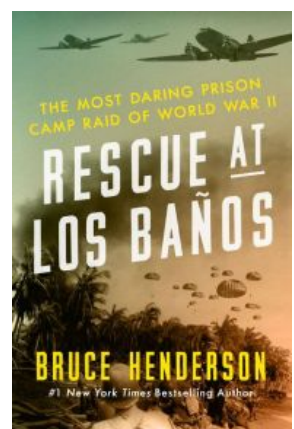
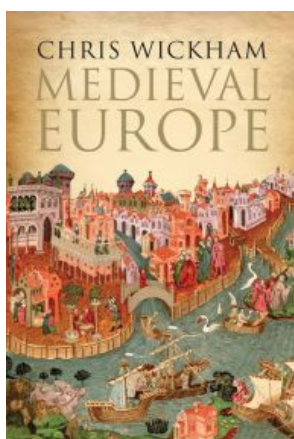
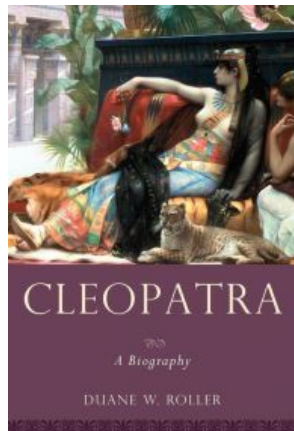
## OBJECTIVE

Initially my idea for this project consisted of finding three out-of-print, very old books and reinterpreting the design of their covers according to the market trends for their respective genres. I was quickly overwhelmed by the number of options available to me as I spent a few hours looking through all the stacks of Neilson Library. I found one book that seemed promising and another which was mildly interesting. When I began considering design possibilities for the former, I noticed the author's name was abbreviated, and I realized I had originally overlooked a major component of design in formulating my objective: gender of the author. I was reminded of a project called Coverflip, started by Maureen Johnson, which pokes fun at the extremely gendered design paradigms of the Young Adult book market. I decided that I would now attempt to redesign the cover of my chosen book in the spirit of this online challenge: a modern cover designed for a male author, and one for a female author.

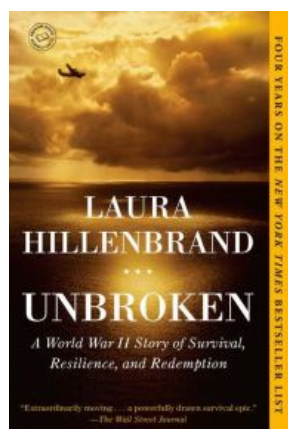
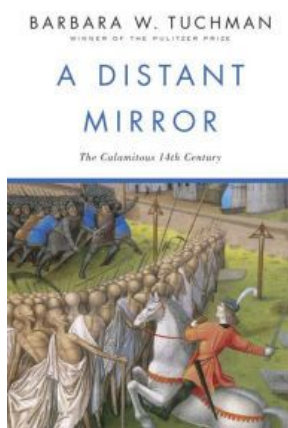
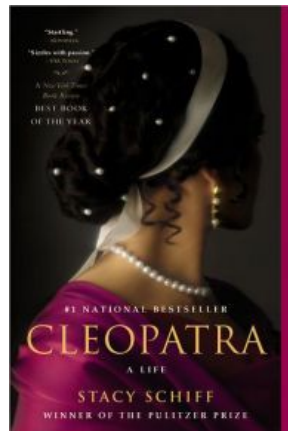
## RESEARCH

While the Coverflip project mocked a very obvious phenomenon, I was concerned that because *Heroines of the Crusades* was a history book, it might not be subject to gendered design like a fiction book would be. My research, which consisted of choosing a current bestselling history book by a male or female author and then finding a comparable example by an author of the opposite sex, quickly assuaged my fears. The cover designs of popular history books were indeed gendered.

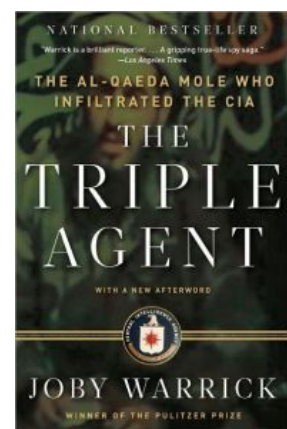
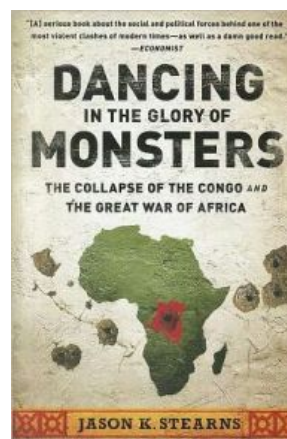
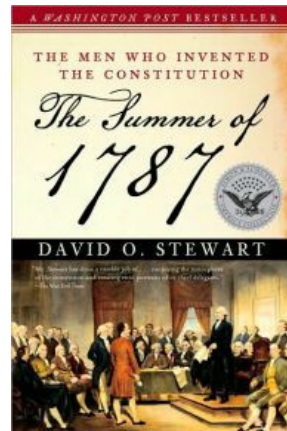
## MALE AUTHORS



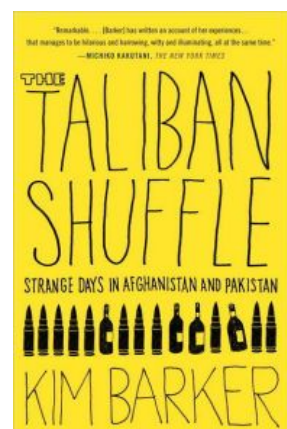
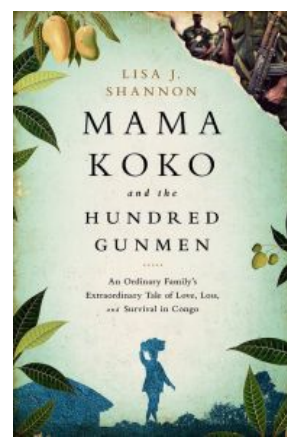
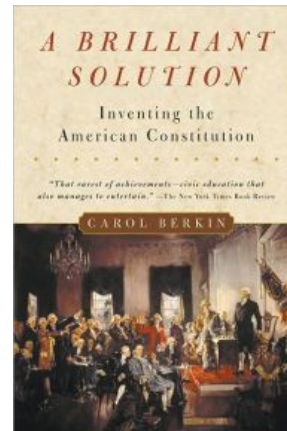
## FEMALE AUTHORS



## MALE AUTHORS



## FEMALE AUTHORS



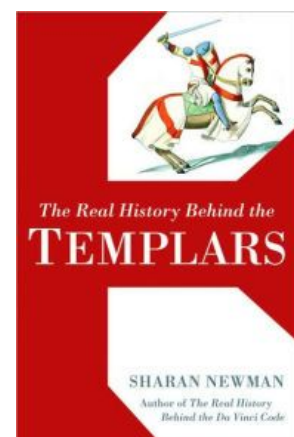
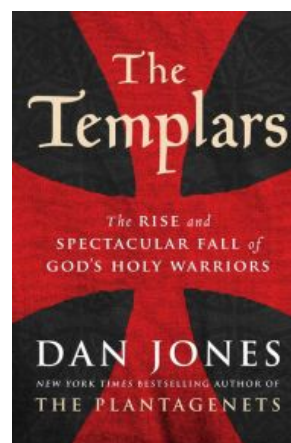
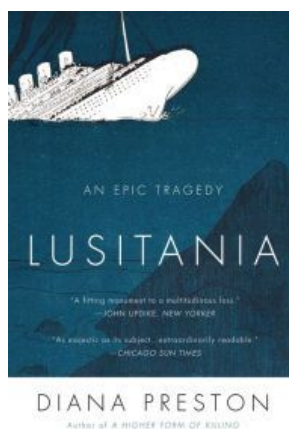
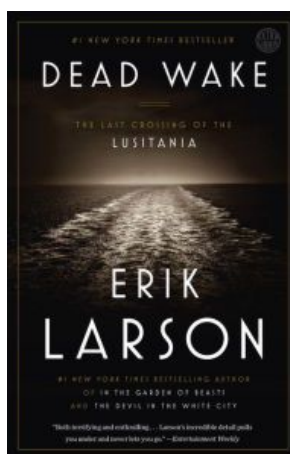
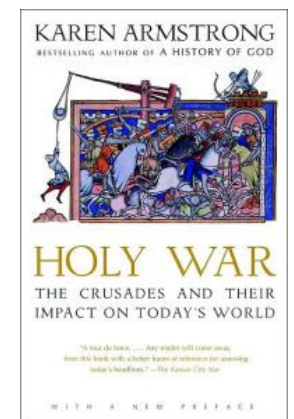
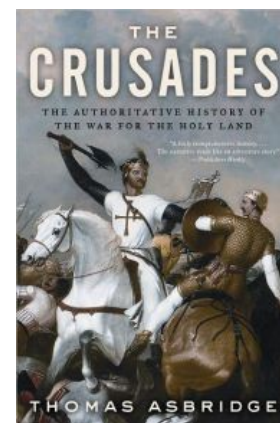
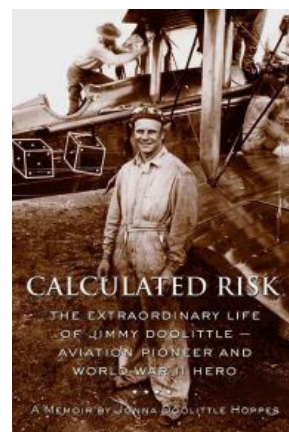
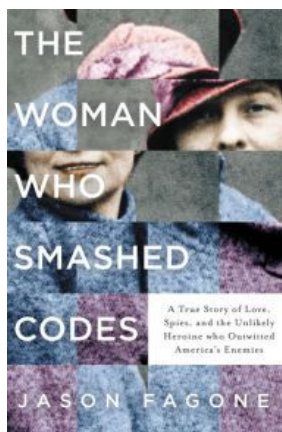
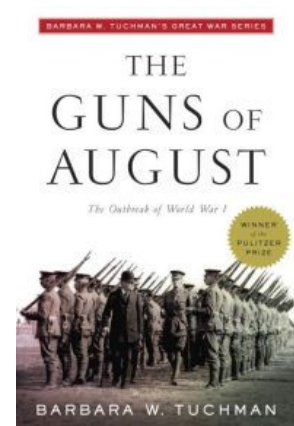
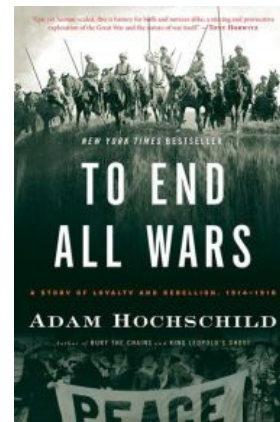
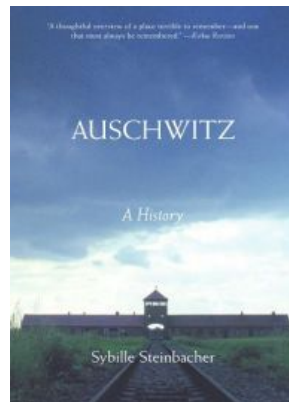
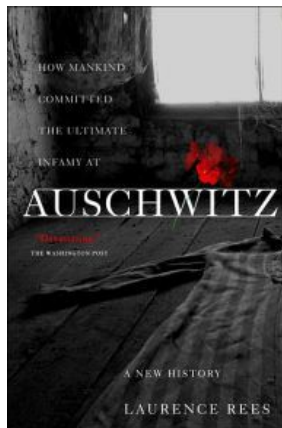


## MALE AUTHORS

## FEMALE AUTHORS

## MALE AUTHORS

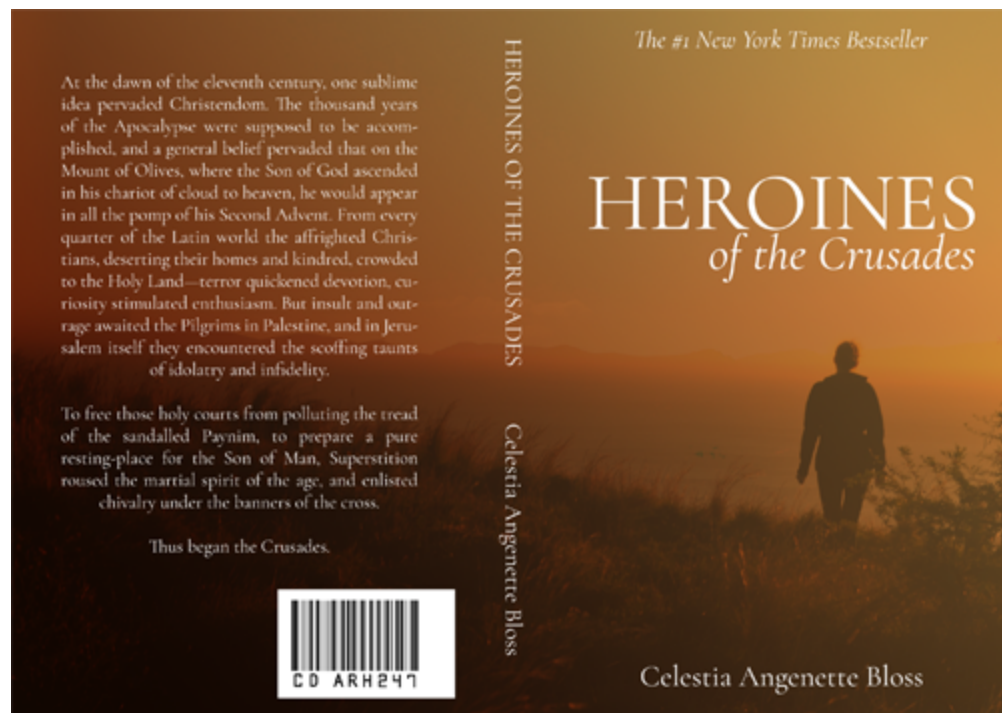
## FEMALE AUTHORS



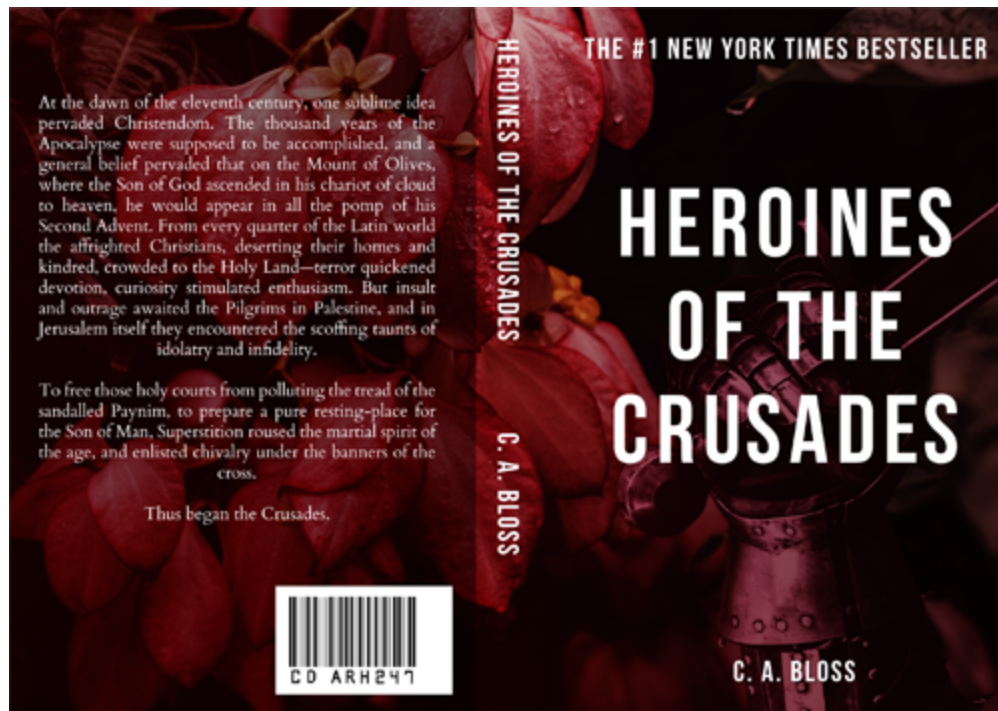
## DEVELOPMENT

The trends I observed were as follows: books by female authors were generally brighter, more likely to use what I like to call the “skinny bestseller serif” typeface, more likely to reference personal narratives or stories, and were much more likely to be mistaken for fiction based on their cover. Books by male authors were darker, often used narrow sans-serif typefaces for titles, used imagery that was literal rather than evocative, were more likely to present themselves as definitive sources, and had a distinct “history book” look to them. Men dominated the war and U.S. history categories, while women captured underrepresented narratives, particularly those of other women.

## FINAL PRODUCT: FEMALE AUTHOR



## FINAL PRODUCT: MALE AUTHOR



## FUTURE PROJECTS

If I were to expand on this project, I would like to redesign books in several genres. I would also want to develop a more scientific approach to researching book covers, perhaps controlling for the subject of the books, the year they were published, and the publishing company. Most of all I want to delve deeper into the designation of typefaces as masculine and feminine, and what that means for marketing outside of the book world.

## NOTES

Stock images are from [unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com)

Information about the Coverflip Challenge by Maureen Johnson is available on her blog [maureenjohnsonbooks.com](https://maureenjohnsonbooks.com)