(and of course, romantically), narrates the contemporary half.

Ten years and 14 books later, Willig is cheerfully matter-of-fact when describing her work and how it’s structured, marketed, and read. “Pink was very much a product of a certain moment in time,” she reflects. “Everything was light, and frivolous, and slightly silly....I personally could not write that book now, and even if I did, I don’t know if I could sell it now.” To her, romance novels are workaday objects, more artisanal than art. “The same way that you find that really beautiful furniture, that was designed for everyday use, winds up in the Victoria & Albert, the really good romance novels have outlasted their own period” and are seen as exemplars of their form. On the other end of the spectrum, she adds, there’s IKEA: mass-produced, functional, and ultimately disposable.

Many aspiring writers dream ardently about publication; Willig dreamt urgently. When she was nine, Simon & Schuster rejected her manuscript, and “I was just totally devastated, because I was going to be in double-digits next year! I was going to be old.” At the end of her second year of Harvard’s graduate program in history, she felt again that “This is now or never, make or break”—and so after sitting her general exams, she resolved to use the summer to write fiction. “I needed to do it before that sort of historical voice in my head was entirely dead. My characters were starting to think in footnotes.”

Readers might be struck by the similarities between the author and her narrator, Eloise—both are alumnae of an all-girls Manhattan private school (Chapin), with an academic interest in espionage and a taste for sleek shoes—but Willig chose a different specialty at Harvard (Tudor and Stuart, not Regency), and on her research year in England, did not stumble on a pristine and overabundant cache of old documents. Instead she discovered that she would rather practice law in New York City than be a professor anywhere else, and decided to follow what she calls a family tradition of “lawyers who are lapsed academics.”

As Willig started her first year of Harvard Law School, a publisher bought Pink

away on publicity tour, she did her day job remotely. During the five years of that double life in letters and law, Willig produced four books. Eventually, she left the firm to write full-time, and at peak speed produced three full-length manuscripts in a year, as well as a handful of shorter works.

This July brings The Lure of the Moonflower, which concludes the Pink Carnation series. Willig’s other new work, The Other Daughter, will come out the same month—but it will be shelved at a distance. Published in handsome hardcover, it’s a stand-alone story in which the prose is less winking, the banter has a steeleier edge, and the romance runs on revenge rather than high-spirited high jinks. By now, Willig’s a seasoned naturalist in the wilds of commercial publishing. Having mastered its taxonomy of subgenres, she can name the diverse species of romance and historical fiction; she can tell which are thriving and which are dying out. Yet she embarks on the next phase of her career with that old sense of urgency: “I needed to do something different,” she says, but she also wanted to end the series on her terms. Her literary agent had advised that her future would

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**Chapter & Verse**

Correspondence on not-so-famous lost words

Stuart Kirsch seeks a source “for what many commentators, including Alan Dershowitz in The Vanishing American Jew, refer to as a ‘quip’ or ‘anecdote’: ‘A Jew is defined as someone who has (or will have) Jewish grandchildren.’”

Stephen Josephs asks who declared, “A generalization is useful only insofar as one’s knowledge of the particulars will take him.” He has heard it attributed to Henry James.

“his error is himself” (May-June). Gene Dwyer, who kept his Greek Aa textbook, wrote, “The (unattributed) apothegm ‘The Two Packs’ is cited in Lesson 12 in Chase and Phillips, A New Introduction to Greek (1961), 43 (I translate, with Chase’s and Phillips’s help): ‘Each man carries two packs, one before and one behind. And each is full of faults. The one before carries the faults of others, and the other those of the man himself. Because of this men do not see their own faults, but they very keenly see those of others.’” After consulting Kenyon College colleague William McCulloh, he added: “The fable can be found in Greek in B.E. Perry, Aesopica I (1952), no. 266, and the Latin version in Phaedrus, book IV, fable 10 (Loeb Classical Library 436, pages 316-17 [1975]). In both cases, credit the legendary Aesop!”

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