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TBR

Inside the List

By [DWIGHT GARNER](#)

COVER STORIES: What you are looking at, above, are three editions of Scott Spencer's classic 1979 novel "Endless Love." At left is the original hardcover design; at center is the 1981 mass market paperback cover, tied to the film version starring [Brooke Shields](#); and at right is the Ecco edition currently available in bookstores. Can you guess which was a Times best seller? The Shields version, of course — it stuck on the paperback list for nine weeks in the movie's wake.

I asked Spencer, by e-mail, what it was like to have his very good novel find so many readers in an edition that evoked a pretty bad movie. (The film's tagline: "She is 15. He is 17. The love every parent fears.") He sent along the following mini-history: "'Endless Love' first came into the world wearing only a somewhat stark jacket designed by Paul Bacon — what was (and maybe still is) called a print solution: red type on a dark blue background. My editor, Victoria Wilson, was a perfectionist, and she brought me along with her to the printing plant in Westchester, where she kept an eye on the jackets as they rolled off press, so she could make sure the colors were right. Then the paperback came out, with the title written in a tortured typeface, a font perhaps based on the handwriting of some stalker. But then, of course, the movie tie-in: with Brooke Shields and Martin Hewitt locked in a dreamy kiss. It was a rather beautiful image, I thought, with lovely colors, but the horrible reputation of the movie itself cast a shadow over the cover. This was my third book and the first time I had made any money from writing (or from anything else), so I was reluctant to bite the hand that was feeding me. But the embarrassment of being associated with a film that most people found cruddy took a toll on me, and in the long run, I think it took a toll on the book itself. It remains one of those books that, when people say something good about it, there is often a hurried reassurance that it's really nothing like the movie. When Ecco brought out a trade edition of 'Endless Love' without any visual reference to the movie, I felt a great relief — my novel and I had finally outlasted the movie and its long, lingering half-life." Scott Spencer has a new novel out — "Willing," about a writer on an opulent sex tour. You can read Tom Bissell's review in this issue.

NOTES: Jonah Goldberg's "Liberal Fascism," after seven weeks here, climbs into the No. 1 spot on the nonfiction list. ... [Barack Obama](#)'s 1995 memoir "Dreams From My Father" is No. 4 on the paperback nonfiction list (right behind his own "Audacity of Hope"). But "Dreams From My Father" has also begun to sell again in hardcover; the book is No. 33 on the hardcover extended list. ... Charles Bock's much-discussed first novel, "Beautiful Children," is No. 33 on the hardcover fiction extended list. Signed first editions of Bock's novel are selling for as much as \$100 on used book sites — or you can go to [abebooks.com](#) and spend \$500 on a signed copy that "comes with 1/10 (worldwide) handmade cassette tapes ... made by Charles Bock himself ... and a hand-written track-by-track list by Charles Bock."

