





## Shelf Awareness for Readers for Friday, January 17, 2014

### Book Review

#### Fiction

#### ★ **The Visionist** by Rachel Urquhart



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Set amid the ecstatic throes of America's Second Great Awakening in the 1840s, Rachel Urquhart's smoldering debut, *The Visionist*, follows teenaged Polly Kimball as she runs from the law and her past after setting fire to the family farmhouse with her vile, abusive father inside. Finding refuge in the City of Hope, a nearby Shaker community, Polly learns that, though she may escape the fallible judgment of mankind, God's wrath against wickedness burns eternal. To complicate matters, all eyes turn intently toward Polly when she begins manifesting angelic visions and proclamations believed to be sent from the Shaker prophetess Mother Ann Lee.

Rich with history and mystical intrigue, Urquhart's American gothic is capable of sending chills across your skin one moment, then warming your heart the next. Torn between her friendship with Sister Charity and the machinations of Elder Sister Agnes, Polly's heavenly visions may very well crumble under the cruelty of her tremendous guilt.

Like Nathaniel Hawthorne's haunted novels, *The Visionist* tests a community's faith and devotion as expertly mounted, suspenseful threats grow. The story is as eerie as it is heartrending, weighing miracle against coincidence, deviation against sincerity, with the remnants of one rural family hanging in the balance. *The Visionist* will have you holding your breath until the final, magnificent revelation. --[Dave Wheeler](#), bookseller, [The Elliott Bay Book Co.](#), Seattle, Wash.

**Discover:** In Rachel Urquhart's smoldering debut novel, a young woman runs from her scorched past into a reverent community convinced of fire and brimstone.

Little, Brown, \$26, hardcover, 9780316228114

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