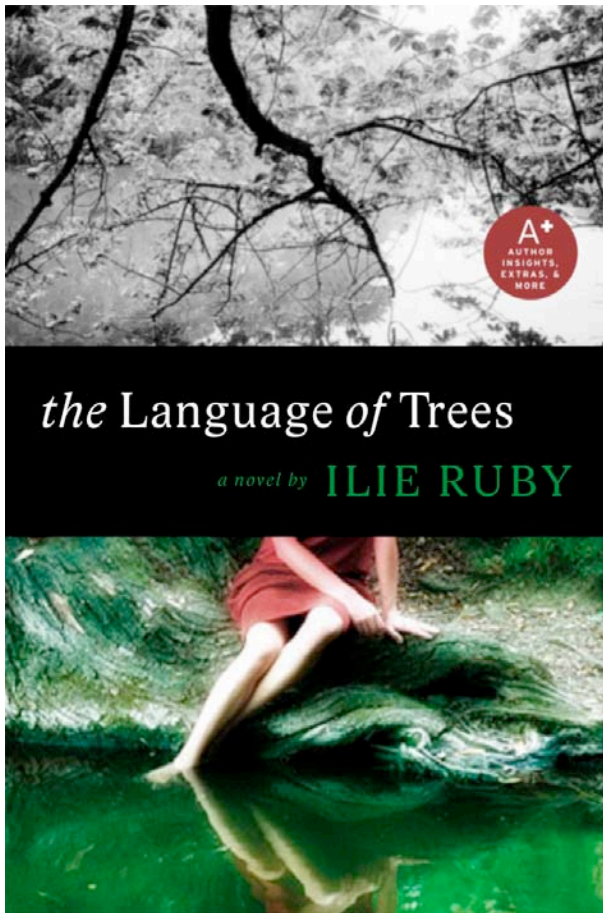


Concord author puts down roots with ‘Trees,’ new family

By David Wildman, *Boston Herald*

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When Concord-based writer Ilie Ruby's first novel was accepted by a major publisher it was the highlight of her life.

But it was matched by the joy the fledgling author felt when she became a mom, adopting three Ethiopian children.

What's unusual is that both milestones happened within three weeks, a confluence of events so unlikely that even Ruby, whose fiction is steeped in mysticism and magic, says she couldn't get away with putting it in a book.

"Nobody would have believed it," said the 43-year-old Ruby. "But

these kinds of things do happen to me. It's like giving birth, with the novel and family coming at the same time. You just have to wonder about the synchronicity in the universe."

A self-professed late bloomer, Ruby worked on her novel, "The Language of Trees," for 10 years before it was bought by Harper Collins in late 2009. It was published last week to strong critical approval; USA Today referred to her as "a

literary rising star.”

“The Language of Trees” is set around Canandaigua Lake, which is near her hometown in upstate New York. Ruby spent her summers as a child at the lake, which is a spiritual site for American Indians. In her book, three children take a boat out at night, and one of them, 7-year-old Luke, never returns. Ten years later, one of his sisters mysteriously vanishes. It’s a haunting tale about the healing of a town torn apart by grief. The theme of redemption is not just present in her fiction. It’s something Ruby says she feels strongly about in her personal life.

“I believe in second chances,” she said. “Hearing the stories my daughter Eden has to tell about what her life was like, the extreme poverty, and watching her now in the school talent show dancing to ‘Boom Boom Pow’ with such pride and confidence, you see that people really can have a new life.”

Ruby’s new life includes touring and promoting the book through readings, something she’s only recently discovered she is good at.

“I’ve always had a fear of speaking in public,” she said. “Now it’s my favorite part, talking to people and listening to their stories.”

Ruby thinks that her novel could be coming out at just the right time, due to an increased interest in spirituality. She cites the popularity of such books as “The Lovely Bones,” as well as the ongoing popularity of works of magical realism from favorite authors Alice Hoffman, Isabel Allende and Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

“Calling it a trend sounds contrived,” she said. “I don’t know if I can write anything but this, because I didn’t set out to write this.”

Is she prepared for possible literary fame?

“Absolutely,” she quickly answered. Then she paused and smiled.



“I’m just living my life,” Ruby said. “When you have three little children, you can’t prepare for much more than the next four hours. But I’m really enjoying the ride.”

Ilie Ruby reads from “The Language of Trees” at Newtonville Books, 296 Walnut St., Newtonville, Tuesday at 7 p.m. 617-244-6619; newtonvillebooks.com.

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