

# Books

## In Christopher Bollen's 'Havoc,' an unlikely pair of criminals

The author's mysteries, set in glamorous locations, anticipated the 'White Lotus' trend

BY MARION WINIK | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT



CLARE MALLISON FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

**‘W**hat do I do? I liberate people who don't know they're stuck. I help them to press the eject switch. That's one definition. Another? I sow chaos. I clean house.

"I change people's lives for the better, whether they see it that way or not. Only once did my actions end for the worst. But I don't like to talk about the murder."

We know early on that 81-year-old narrator Maggie Burkhardt, formerly of Wisconsin but on the move since the pandemic, is no sweet little old lady. She may not like to talk about the murder, or the reason for her departure from her last hotel in Switzerland, but she does acknowledge a daily

dose, sometimes doubled, of the anti-psychotic drug risperidone, used to treat schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

"Sometimes I honestly don't recognize myself in the mirror, and it's not simply because I dyed my hair black after my escape from the Alps. And it's not the new wardrobe of loose, long-sleeved kaftans covered in loud prints that I've adopted since starting afresh in Luxor." No, it's something more profound that has turned Maggie into the "dying, pitiful organism" she encounters in the glass. Both her unremitting grief over the loss of her husband and daughter and her deep revulsion with the aging

**HAVOC**  
By Christopher Bollen  
Harper, 360 pages, \$30

process play a role. And then there's that pesky psychosis thing.

Christopher Bollen anticipated the "White Lotus" craze with a series of thrillers in fantasy travel destinations, the isle of Patmos, Greece, and Venice among them. "Havoc," his latest, is set at the Royal Karnak Palace, a decaying grand hotel in Luxor, Egypt. Burkhardt has settled in there, becoming good friends with other long-term guests, particularly a gay couple, Zachary and Ben, the latter of whom is an Egyptologist working at the local antiquities museum. The threesome enjoy wine with lunch by the pool, along with ogling a gorgeous young local in a Speedo they call "the gigolo." Maggie also makes herself helpful to the manager,

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### BIBLIOPHILES

## Rachel Howzell Hall loves books about shipwrecks and cults

BY AMY SUTHERLAND | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

After penning a list of mysteries set in the darker corners of Southern California, Rachel Howzell Hall turns to a world of magic and evil forces in her first romantic fantasy, "The Last One." The author may have switched genres, but one thing remains the same: A woman is in trouble, big trouble. Hall is also the author of the "We Lie Here," "These Toxic Things," and "And Now She's Gone." She lives in her hometown of Los Angeles with her husband and daughter.

**BOOKS:** What are you reading?  
**HALL:** The new Paula Hawkins's mystery, "The Blue Hour." It feels very gothic and very old-school, almost like a Shirley Jackson novel. I hated that a flight I took was only 90 minutes because that meant I had to stop reading it.

**BOOKS:** Do you make a point of reading new books?  
**HALL:** Publication dates don't matter to me unless I'm going on vacation and a shipwreck book has just come out, which happened recently. David Grann's "The Wager" came out right before my last vacation. I loved it. I don't know why I love these shipwreck-mutiny-murder books but I do. It's really strange. I'm not into naval history or naval whatever. I think what fascinates me is what folks do when they are desperate. That and the cold. I'm from L.A. so I don't know anything about extreme cold. When it gets cold here, I can't even imagine how people go to work.

**BOOKS:** What is the last book you read with a great ending?  
**HALL:** Lucinda Barry's murder mystery, "If You Tell a Lie." The ending shocked



ANDRE ELLIS

**‘What fascinates me is what folks do when they are desperate.’**

me. Readers take endings for granted but to successfully do one is so hard. I like Agatha Christie, but I don't like when suddenly it's the butler. I mean, where did that come from?

**BOOKS:** What is your favorite kind of plot twist?  
**HALL:** The Wizard-of-Oz kind of twist, where the answer was there all along

BIBLIOPHILES, Page N9

## Revisiting the Holocaust through one girl's life and death

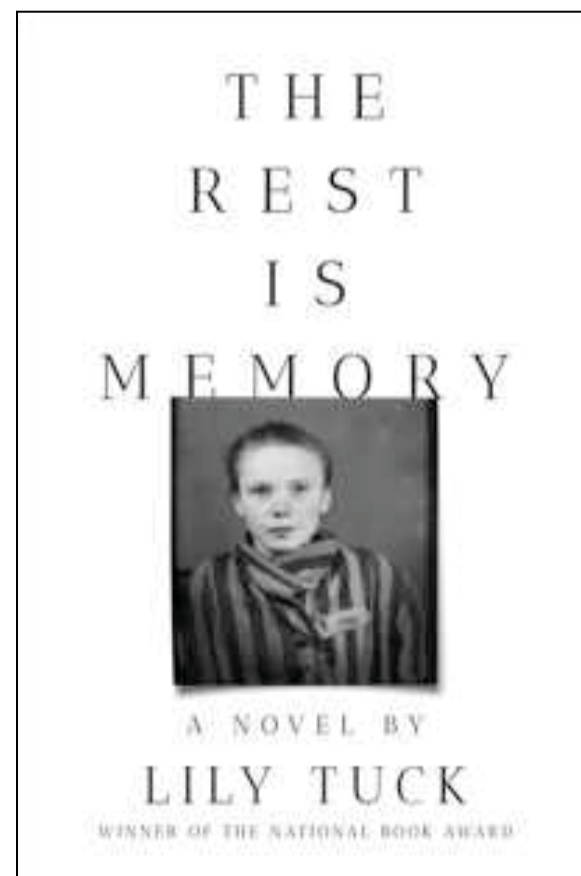
By Clea Simon  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

**A** single death is a tragedy. A million deaths is a statistic. That idea — roughly paraphrasing a quote attributed to Joseph Stalin — could be the guiding principle behind "The Rest Is Memory," a short but searing new novel by Lily Tuck. With her fictional take on 14-year-old Czeslawa Kwoka, who died at Auschwitz, the National Book Award winner brings to vivid life just one of the thousands killed in the Nazi death camp.

One of more than 40,000 Auschwitz prisoners photographed by Wilhelm Brasse, a fellow inmate, the real Czeslawa (her photo graces the cover) was a Catholic Pole from the village of Wolka Zlojeck in the Zamosc region.

In short, nonsequential paragraphs, Tuck adds fictional details to these sparse facts, giving Czeslawa a crush on Anton, a local boy, as well as a favorite hen among the family's chickens: Kinga, who "lays delicate blue eggs that have a dark orange yolk." We learn early that this is not a feel-good story: "A German soldier will wring Kinga's neck, pluck, cook, and eat her."

Likewise, there is no mystery about Czeslawa's fate, or that of her mother, Katarzyna, who both arrive at Auschwitz on Dec. 13, 1942, as part of the enforcement of a 1941 German agrarian policy that declared ownership of Poland's rich farmland, where "not a Pole will remain." Both mother and daughter will die within months.



**THE REST IS MEMORY**  
By Lily Tuck  
W.W. Norton, 144 pages, \$24.95

Setting her story within this short period, Tuck fills out what Czeslawa's life might have been like, both in the camp and before, ricocheting between Nazi records and testimony from survivors, with bits of imagined conversations between young Czeslawa and her friend Krystyna, and memories.

The fictionalized bits — the majority of this short novel — flow and re-

"MEMORY", Page N9

# A Holocaust victim brought vividly to life

► **"MEMORY"**  
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cede around these few known facts. Czeslawa's memories, at first, are realistically full of life and longing, although far from idyllic. There's her crush on Anton, who offers her a ride into town on his motorcycle and buys her a karpaska (cream pie). This infatuation is spoiled when he stops halfway home and demands that she unbutton her dress. She refuses and he abandons her to walk home, and her late arrival results in her father punishing her.

"At the slightest provocation, Pawel, Czeslawa's father, beats her," we learn later. That this flat statement of domestic abuse follows a clinical passage explaining that, in addition to lice-, tick-, and rat-borne illnesses, "the women [in the camp] also suffer from dysentery, typhoid, measles, tuberculosis, exhaustion and injuries from beatings" doesn't mitigate the remembered cruelty. If anything, it adds a layer to the young teen's suffering, explaining, perhaps, her continued infatuation and dreams of escape.

Even as she weakens from starvation and disease, Czeslawa still thinks of Anton and, increasingly, the sweet karpaska he treated her to before his brutish act. "Anton will arrive in his plane and fly away with her," she fantasizes, recalling his ambition to be a pilot. (Tuck gives him a more realistic future: He will die, she writes, when a Luftwaffe bomber misses its intended target, an iron works, and destroys the transport train he is on.)

This fictional tidbit, laid out alongside historical data such as a list of "a few of the women from the Zamosc region who will freeze to death that day or die soon after," is emblematic of Tuck's approach, juxtaposing life and death, the mundane with the historic, the personal detail with the statistic. The result is chilling. When we learn of a yodeling guard and then hear his call — "Ay-ey-ay-ee-ooo" — repeated after yet another killing, we cringe. How could we not?

It doesn't always work. At times the

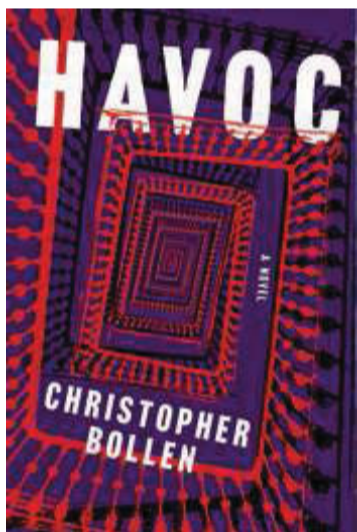
balance is off, and Tuck's abrupt switches from personal tragedy to recorded reality throw us out of Czeslawa's story. When a passage about the looting of corpses — "experienced professionals ... will pull the gold from under the tongue and the diamonds from the uterus and the colon" — leads directly into Czeslawa mourning her formerly "golden blonde" hair and then into how prisoners' hair is spun into "yarn, felt, and socks for submarine crews," the young girl is nearly lost in the kaleidoscope of cruelty.

Tuck's choice to write about a Catholic, one of the 75,000 Poles, rather than any of the 300,000 Jews killed at Auschwitz (to use numbers cited in Tuck's author's note) is worth mentioning, particularly in light of her "Woman of Rome," the author's 2008 biography of Elsa Morante, who hid with her half-Jewish husband from the fascists during World War II. The Zamosc region, Tuck explains, did have a population of 7,000 Jews who were forced into a ghetto in 1941 and largely murdered at the Belzec death camp. In "The Rest Is Memory," this community exists in others' memories. "There were too many of them," says Pawel, while Czeslawa's grandmother recalls a kind act. Czeslawa herself "does not know what Jews are nor does she ask."

This ignorance, as well as her father's anti-Semitism, are realistic creations, and the Czeslawa Tuck gives us — her photo compelling in its unflinching directness — is certainly as innocent as any of the Jews, homosexuals, Roma, disabled people, or others targeted by the Nazis.

Ultimately, an individual is just that: a person, in this case a young girl and a victim. As Tuck shows us in this short, brutal book, Czeslawa Kwoka was a human being rather than a statistic, robbed of a life that can only be imagined.

*Clea Simon is the Somerville-based author most recently of the novel "Bad Boy Beat."*



HARPER/JACK PIERSON

Christopher Bollen's latest novel is "Havoc."

# An unlikely pair of criminals in 'Havoc'

► **"HAVOC"**  
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Ahmed, in various ways, such as helping him letter a sign in English warning guests about essential sun precautions when visiting the tombs.

To her great delight and satisfaction, she has been able to revive the pre-pandemic tradition of gathering the guests on the terrace at sunset to watch the molten red rays "falling like a blush over the hotel's pale Victorian face." The spectacular sunset is the very reason the pharaoh chose Luxor as the site for their tombs. As she rings the bell to assemble the troops at the golden hour, Maggie feels seen and appreciated in a way she craves, and knows through bitter experience is not generally available to 81-year-old women.

However, she is up to her life-changing tricks again, having decided that a couple named Shelley and Geoff Bradley require her attention. Geoff, she believes, spends too much time eyeing other women; Shelley needs to shake free and spread her wings. All it will take to split them up, she decides, is a few breathy hang-up calls and a yellow scarf belonging to a Greek divorcee named Carissa planted in the Bradleys' bedroom. Easy peasy. She steals the housekeeper's master key and heads to the rooms in question to first grab, then place the scarf — but on the way has an encounter with a new guest in the hotel, soon to be revealed as her nemesis.

Otto is an 8-year-old boy, staying at the Royal Karnak with his mother, Tess, in the least-expensive room available, second floor right next to the wheezy elevator. "I can do tricks, too," he says to Maggie, noting the yellow scarf hanging out of her pocket and fixing her with his unsettling bi-colored gaze, one eye

brown and one green. He certainly can. His first will be to figure out exactly what Maggie was up to that day in the hall — this is after Shelley Bradley flees the premises in tears — and then he'll blackmail her into paying for him and his mother to upgrade to a \$900/day luxury suite.

Game on. These two opponents proceed to torture each other with a brutally escalating rendition of cat-and-mouse, only this one is cat, puppy, cocktail, beloved lock of dead husband's hair, and more. As the bloody, charred, poisoned, decapitated or sodden detritus of their feud piles up, friends and family are none the wiser, at least for a while. Otto is romping in the pool with his mother and one of the gay guys. Maggie is invited to manager Ahmed's home for dinner with the family.

"What is a boy?" wonders Maggie, and then answers her own question. "A boy is a bomb ticking in the basement while women practice piano upstairs. A boy is a loaded gun, sitting within reach on a kitchen table. Is a curse word carved into a church pew. Is the menacing crunch of footfall to which deer lift their heads in danger."

Readers of "Havoc" could pose the question, "What is an old lady?" and come up with pretty much the same answer. No one in the great middle ground between 8 and 81 is safe with these two on the loose. Bollen gleefully lays on the melodrama and teases out the unmasking of his very unreliable narrator, escalating to a cymbal-crashing finale of revelations and violence.

*Marion Winik hosts the NPR podcast The Weekly Reader and is the author of "The Big Book of the Dead."*



ALEXANDER GARDNER/GETTY IMAGE



JAE C. HO/ASSOCIATED PRESS



ALEX WONG/GETTY IMAGES

Presidents Abraham Lincoln, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump.

# 'My Fellow Americans' gathers inaugural speeches good, bad, and ugly

By Chris Vognar  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

George Washington faced a unique challenge when he prepared to give his first presidential Inaugural address on April 30, 1789. Nobody in the country had ever done this before; there were no set standards or expectations, no guidelines or national frame of reference. "To be silent on such an important occasion seemed somehow less than presidential" writes Ted Widmer in his introduction to "My Fellow Americans: Presidents and Their Inaugural Addresses." "But to speak for too long, or with too much self-regard, would bring different kinds of problems and invite the criticisms that were already coming in from Americans who were quick to pounce on any signs of privilege."

Washington met the moment with a characteristic combination of strength and humility, his voice at times trembling with anxiety. And newbie US presidents have been striving to strike the right balances ever since, some mix of "I will govern for everyone" and "This is what I will do," part promissory note, part declaration of principles, and, in the case of the recently reelected president, part gloating victory lap. This collection of every presidential inaugural address and accompanying historical essays implicitly asks how we might have gotten from "the better angels of our nature" (Abraham Lincoln's first inaugural) to "This American carnage stops right here and stops right now" (Donald Trump's first inaugural).

Completists and specialists might want to read "My Fellow Americans," edited by Yuvraj Singh, from cover to cover, all 656 pages, though Widmer, a former speechwriter for Bill Clinton, offers fair warning: "Needless to say, there are mountains of bad writing that need to be taken with a grain of salt. We should not forget that Americans enjoyed long, stemwinding orations in the long night that preceded television, and there is no shortage of them here." A better approach might be to cherry-pick through the more momentous and soaring and eventful speeches, which tend to provide both literary frisson and a keen sense of

**MY FELLOW AMERICANS: Presidents and Their Inaugural Addresses**

Edited by Yuvraj Singh  
Oxford University Press, 656 pages, \$34.99

what the country wanted or needed to hear in specific moments of its history.

As with most matters presidential, Lincoln is a great place to start, where quality of prose meets stakes that couldn't have been higher. Between the time he was first elected, Nov. 6, 1860, and the date of his first speech, March 4, 1861, seven Southern states seceded from the Union. As historian David S. Reynolds writes in one of the volume's better accompanying essays, "The Inaugural Address, Lincoln knew, must be very cautiously worded. It must affirm the federal government's resolve to save the Union without pushing the South so hard that reunion became impossible." Civil War, obviously, wasn't prevented, but in appealing to "organic law," or "the fundamental law of all national governments," Lincoln made plain that he wouldn't preside over the Union's dissolution. When he returned to the Inaugural stage exactly four years later, the war nearly won, he used theology to stake out common ground: "Both [parties] read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other." He was assassinated a little more than five weeks later.

Some inaugurals are striking for how crisply and directly they state a president's political philosophy. Ronald Reagan's first inaugural has plenty of folksiness, but its core statement cuts to the quick: "In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem." And some inaugurals, against all odds of circumstance, collaboration and polemic, read like literature. Such is the case with Barack Obama's first inaugural, a propulsive piece of writing that borrows from Lincoln in mixing themes of sacrifice, idealism, and hope; from Reagan in its well-timed, colloquial insertion of a "Well" here, a

"Now" there; and from the church, the intonations and rhythms of which he taps into effortlessly. The speech has a vitality, optimism, and fierce intelligence that seem to come from another century, if not another country: "Our security emanates from the justice of our cause, the force of our example, the tempering qualities of humility and restraint."

Such restraint would not be the hallmark of the next man to issue an inaugural (they are, of course, all men, a sad fact that meets little scrutiny in these pages). Reading Trump's inaugural, crafted with a big assist from his svengali Steve Bannon, is like being hit by a blunt-force verbal object — short, declarative sentences about "the people" and why they made the right decision in voting for him (although, of course, a minority of voters actually did). Nicholas F. Jacobs sums up the message in his accompanying essay: "The purpose of government is to help those that win, and to help them keep winning; winners get to rule and losers must accept their fate; especially in the global arena, Americans must win first." So much for the better angels of our nature.

The essays in "My Fellow Americans" often lean more toward summary than analysis, and the lay reader might not be terribly interested in what Millard Fillmore or John Tyler had to say back in the day. But tracing the evolution (and de-evolution) of the inaugural address makes for a telling means of studying political discourse at a time when it has reverted to its coarsest form. Then again, the old days of presidential inaugurals weren't sparkling in all their particulars. We leave you with William Henry Harrison, our ninth president, who blustered on in his inaugural for an hour and forty minutes in a snowstorm, got sick (likely with pneumonia), and died a month into his presidency. Let him be an example to all future presidents. You'll have plenty of time to talk once you take office.

*Chris Vognar, a freelance culture writer, was the 2009 Nieman Arts and Culture Fellow at Harvard University.*

# Lover of mysteries since she was a child

► **BIBLIOPHILES**  
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and all you had to do was look into yourself to find it. As Maya Angelou has said, believe people when they say who they are. A lot of times we fail to see the truth until unfortunately it's too late. We are the boogyman.

**BOOKS:** Which writers do a good job with that kind of plot device?

**HALL:** Definitely Jess Lourey, who writes these crime stories set in Minnesota. Those stories do have boogymen, but there's also a lot of internal monsters. Stephen King is my first love when it comes to monsters within. Stephen Graham Jones is another. His stories weave Native American myth with a lot of internal monsters. His endings are truly scary.

**BOOKS:** For how long have you read mysteries?

**HALL:** Always. I'm a child of the '80s. When I was 10, I was reading Stephen King, V.C. Andrews, Jackie Collins, and Sidney Sheldon. Then my reading expanded to crime writing. In college, I turned to Black contemporary writers such as Terry McMillan and Bebe Moore Campbell. These writers helped me fill out who I was. Terry McMillan was like church for me.

**BOOKS:** Do you read nonfiction beyond the shipwreck books?

**HALL:** Anything by Erik Larsen, anything by Richard Preston, who wrote "The Hot Zone," and then books about cults. Anything about Jim Jones and the Jonestown massacre. I've read Tim Reiterman's book about Jones, "Raven," two or three times. And, of course, Jon Krakauer. I've read his book about Mount Everest, "Into Thin Air," about four times. I won't let anyone borrow that or his book about the

Mormons, "Under the Banner of Heaven."

**BOOKS:** Do you have rules for lending your books?

**HALL:** If I'm not going to read a book again, or I don't like looking at it and thinking, "I read that!," you can have it. For the most part, the only person I'll let borrow my books is my daughter, but if she keeps one too long, I'll hunt for it. I have found books in my car in her beach bag. If I really want someone to read a book, I'll send them a copy. Otherwise, you can read it here, like in one of those fancy libraries where you have to wear white gloves.

*Follow us on Facebook or Twitter @GlobeBiblio. Amy Sutherland is the author, most recently, of "Rescuing Penny Jane" and she can be reached at amysutherland@mac.com.*

# The Fine Print

NEW ENGLAND LITERARY NEWS | NINA MACLAUGHLIN

## Half a century of being 'Free'

In the early 1970s, actress, author, activist Marlo Thomas was looking for books to give her young niece and was dismayed by the misogyny and sexual inequality she found in children's books. So she decided to write her own. The result, "Free to Be ... You and Me," became a cultural sensation, spinning off a record and TV special. The songs and stories encouraged gender neutrality, underlining that anyone can achieve anything, as well as reminding everyone that it's all right to cry. The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art is celebrating the sensation with a new exhibit. "Free to Be ... You and Me: 50 Years of Stories and Songs," which runs through April 6, showcases original artwork from the 1974 book by Barbara Bascope and Arnold Lobel, with illustrations by Jerry Pinkney, Susan Jeffers, John Steptoe, and Lonnie Sue Johnson, among others. Included in the show is art from the 35th anniversary edition as well, with work by LeUyen Pham, Tony DiTerlizzi, Peter Reynolds, and others. Featuring nearly 50 works, including the iconic album cover, first editions of the books, audio recordings, and other miscellany related to the project, the show highlights "Free to Be" and its lasting impact on multiple generations of listeners and readers.

Artwork by Barbara Bascope from "Free to Be ... You and Me"



BARBARA BASCOPE, ILLUSTRATION FOR "FREE TO BE ... YOU AND ME" (RUNNING PRESS). COLLECTION OF THE NORMAN ROCKWELL MUSEUM. 1974

## Writing on blindness and Braille

Naomi Cohn's debut memoir takes the form of an imagined encyclopedia, using fragmented prose-poem entries to explore her unfolding vision loss and what it means to be blind. "The Braille Encyclopedia," put out by the local Rose Metal Press, is, above all, a love letter to Braille. "Braille is the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. ... When my finger touches braille bumps, something moves in me." Cohn writes entries on Louis Braille, his accident with an awl in his father's saddle-making shop, on the diagnosis, treatment (and lack thereof), and what it is to learn to live in an altered way, how to claim new forms of sight. She is open, too, about the ways in which legal definitions of blindness fail: "Each blind eye, each blind mind, is different." Which can apply to disability more broadly, the way laws limit and constrict and take not into account the variability of experience. Cohn writes too about her parents, their long marriage, her early adoration of language as a result of them. "I am made of words," she writes, "of the syllable-song of speech." History and medical science slot next to entries on occupational therapy, the smell of soy ink of a printed literary magazine, "with its mixed notes of soil and factory," with "little couplets like deer tracks mincing down the page." Throughout, there's an openness, a curiosity, a celebration, without being cloying or sentimental, of all the ways it's possible to exist in the world, of how to live fully with the body you have, and she asks the good question: "How do you talk about where joy happens?"



ANNA MIN

Naomi Cohn

## New magazine is weird in the best way

The first issue of The Mystic MoneyMaker, a new little periodical that gathers words, images, and weirdness from the Mystic Valley, had a theme of Trick or Treat for its October arrival. Eddie Knox samples local desserts in Cambrioche and Sugarville; Kurt James Werner offers a music score for clawhammer banjo called "Fingers & Toes," named after a sketch of plants on his desk. There are horoscopes from Eve; a moon candy wrapper cartoon from Aliza Razell; a local pinball machine dispatch from JM Grant; a selection of drawings of matchbooks, frogs, and cats; and a Community Board, "basically a paper Craigslist" with open invites for beginner tennis ("all skill levels except the snobbish welcome"), the election, and a lost rose gold ring. Artist and aerial performer Aliza Razell and her artist partner John Lapsley founded the journal to satisfy the want (and need!) for experiencing people's art that isn't on a screen and to highlight work from the Mystic Valley, and the result is the best sort of strange, a medley of who-knows-what, and an ideal antidote to your phone. The next issue's theme is Ice or Soot, and they welcome submissions at bit.ly/iammystic.

## Coming out

"What in Me Is Dark: The Revolutionary Afterlife of Paradise Lost" by Orlando Reade (Astra House)  
 "The Rest Is Silence" by Augusto Monterroso, translated from the Spanish by Aaron Kerner (NYRB Classics)  
 "Tali Girls" by Siamak Herawi, translated from the Persian by Sara Khalili (Archipelago)

## Pick of the week

Mike Hare at Northshire Bookstore in Manchester, Vt., recommends "The Lost and the Found: A True Story of Homelessness, Found Family, and Second Chances" by Kevin Fagan (Atria/One Signal): "A haunting, harrowing account of homelessness in America. Veteran journalist Fagan traces the personal and family histories of two unhoused people in San Francisco, and captures the hope and heartbreak of lives on the edge. This deeply insightful book brings humanity to those often scorned and abandoned by society."  
 Nina MacLaughlin can be reached at nmacLaughlin@gmail.com.

## STORY BEHIND THE BOOK | KATE TUTTLE

# Walking through history in an ancient Persian city in 'My Father's House'

Children's book author Mina Javaherbin is an architect as well as a writer, and her latest book was largely inspired by the architecture of her father's hometown, Isfahan, Iran. In "My Father's House," Javaherbin recreates a walk through Isfahan with her father, punctuated by stops at many of the city's notable buildings, including a mosque, synagogue, and Christian church. "It's a companion book to 'My Grandma and Me,' which is about my father's mom," explains Javaherbin. "She has a cameo in the book."  
 Isfahan is rich in architectural and human history, Javaherbin continues, and a site of centuries of cultural and religious co-existence. "I've always wanted to write about that city, because this is the city that truly inspired me to become an architect," she says. "We have a time-share in Paris. This city is more beautiful than Paris with much more history."  
 It's also a place nobody in Javaherbin's family has visited since immigrating to the United States in the 1980s.



DAVID WILSON FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Javaherbin's father was dying as she was writing the book. "I gave him one of the first drafts," she says. "He read it and his eyes sparkled."  
 In a time when the region is rife with conflict and totalitarianism, it's good to remember cities like Isfahan, says Javaherbin. "It's such an amazing thing to be from that part of the world. It's important that people know that it is possible that people of different religious groups can actually build something together, can do something beautiful together," she says.  
 Even within her own family, she adds, the region's rich history of cultural diversity can be seen. "My grandma might have even been Jewish," she says. "My Muslim grandma might have been Jewish! I love that. It's all so mixed."  
 In visiting Javaherbin's father's home, even virtually, she says she hopes young readers will come away with "a love of architecture, a love of history, and a connection into how people can actually live together and build beauty together and be friends together from different backgrounds."

Mina Javaherbin will read at 4 p.m. Tuesday at Beacon Hill Books & Cafe. Registration required.  
 Kate Tuttle edits the Globe's Books section.

## BOOKINGS

All author appearances are in person and free unless otherwise noted.

### SUNDAY

Nina Pfister ("The Magic of Christmas Ravioli") will read at 1:30 p.m. at IAM Books. (Registration required.) ... Aaron Becker ("Winter Light") will read at 11 a.m. at Book Ends Winchester.

### MONDAY

Candace Walsh ("Iridescent Pigeons"), Isabel Cristina Legarda ("Beyond the Gallions"), and Julie Alden Cullinane ("Ghosts Only I Can See") will read at 7 p.m. at Belmont Books ... Addie L. Robinson ("A Queen Like Me") will read at 6 p.m. at the Boston Public Library—Central. (Registration required.)

### TUESDAY

Mina Javaherbin ("My Father's House") will read at 4 p.m. at Beacon Hill Books & Cafe. (Registration required.) ... Jenny L. Howe ("How to Get a Life in Ten Dates") is in conversation with Courtney Kae at 7 p.m. at An Unlikely Story. (Tickets are \$5.) ... Holly Thompson ("Listening to Trees: George Nakashima, Woodworker") is in conversation with Asako Katsura at 6 p.m. virtually via the Japan Society of Boston.

### WEDNESDAY

Jordan Slocum and Barry Bordelon ("For the Love of Renovating") will read at 6 p.m. at the Boston Athenaeum.

### THURSDAY

Sebastian Smea ("Paris in Ruins") is in conversation with Diana Seave Greenwald at 7 p.m. at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. (Adult tickets start at \$15.)

### FRIDAY

Kelly Bishop ("The Third Gilmore Girl") is in conversation with Meagan McGinness-Bessey at 6:30 p.m. at WBUR CitySpace via Brookline Booksmith. (Tickets start at \$10.)

### SATURDAY

Jaya Mehta and Susan Lynn Meyer ("Nisha's Just-Right Christmas Tree") will read at 11 a.m. at the Silver Unicorn Bookstore ... George Walters-Sleyon ("The Rush for Black Diamonds") will read at 2:30 p.m. at the Boston Public Library—Jamaica Plain.

Event times and dates are subject to change.

## LOCAL BESTSELLERS

### HARDCOVER FICTION

1. James Percival Everett DOUBLEDAY
2. Intermezzo Sally Rooney FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX
3. Small Things Like These Claire Keegan GROVE PRESS
4. The Grey Wolf Louise Penny MINOTAUR BOOKS
5. Tell Me Everything Elizabeth Strout RANDOM HOUSE
6. The City and Its Uncertain Walls Haruki Murakami KNOPF
7. The God of the Woods Liz Moore RIVERHEAD BOOKS
8. The Women Kristin Hannah ST. MARTIN'S PRESS
9. Playground Richard Powers W.W. NORTON & COMPANY
10. Water, Water: Poems Billy Collins RANDOM HOUSE



### PAPERBACK FICTION

1. Orbital Samantha Harvey GROVE PRESS
2. North Woods Daniel Mason RANDOM HOUSE TRADE PAPERBACKS
3. The Frozen River Ariel Lawhon VINTAGE
4. Demon Copperhead Barbara Kingsolver HARPER PERENNIAL
5. The Berry Pickers Amanda Peters CATAPULT
6. The Best American Short Stories 2024 Lauren Groff, Heidi Pitlor (Eds.) MARINER BOOKS
7. The Housemaid Freida McFadden GRAND CENTRAL
8. Hello Beautiful Ann Napolitano DIAL PRESS TRADE
9. The Vegetarian Han Kang HOGARTH
10. A Court of Thorns and Roses Sarah J. Maas BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING



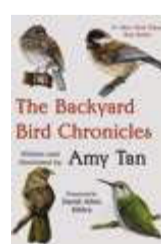
### HARDCOVER NONFICTION

1. The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World Robin Wall Kimmerer, John Burgoyne (Illus.) SCRIBNER
2. Be Ready When the Luck Happens: A Memoir Ina Garten CROWN
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4. What the Chicken Knows Sy Montgomery ATRIA BOOKS
5. Cher: The Memoir, Part One Cher DEY STREET BOOKS
6. The Demon of Unrest Erik Larson CROWN
7. What I Ate in One Year (And Related Thoughts) Stanley Tucci GALLERY BOOKS
8. The Message Ta-Nehisi Coates ONE WORLD
9. Patriot: A Memoir Alexei Navalny KNOPF
10. Nexus Yuval Noah Harari RANDOM HOUSE



### PAPERBACK NONFICTION

1. The Backyard Bird Chronicles Amy Tan KNOPF
2. The 2025 Old Farmer's Almanac OLD FARMER'S ALMANAC
3. Say Nothing Patrick Radden Keefe VINTAGE
4. The Art Thief Michael Finkel VINTAGE
5. On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century Timothy Snyder CROWN
6. Democracy Awakening: Notes on the State of America Heather Cox Richardson PENGUIN BOOKS
7. Braiding Sweetgrass Robin Wall Kimmerer MILKWEED EDITIONS
8. Greenlights Matthew McConaughey CROWN
9. Of Time and Turtles: Mending the World, Shell by Shattered Shell Sy Montgomery, Matt Patterson (Illus.) MARINER BOOKS
10. An Almanac of New York City for the Year 2025 Susan Gail Johnson (Ed.) ABBEVILLE PRESS



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