

# Books

## Bonfire of the Republicans

Looking back at the incendiary politics of the '90s



ISABELLE CARDINAL FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

**BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE: Newt Gingrich, the Fall of a Speaker, and the Rise of the New Republican Party**

By Julian E. Zelizer  
Penguin Press,  
356 pages, \$30

BY DAVID M. SHRIBMAN  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

**N**ewt Gingrich was a white tornado that roared through Washington at the end of the 20th century, blowing the roof off the Capitol, rearranging the furniture of the House, upending the customs of American public life. There was life in Washington circles before Gingrich and then there was life after Gingrich, and there is little resemblance between the two.

He changed the tone and timbre of American civic life. He introduced character assassination into contemporary American politics. He thrust ideological discipline onto party politics. He forced a House speaker from office. He repelled the accommodationist impulse that had existed for decades from the Republican playbook. He ended the Democrats' 40-year rule of the House. He won the speakership. He also left the speakership in disgrace.

Julian E. Zelizer has taken on the task of describing, examining, and analyzing the rebel from Georgia. Zelizer holds an endowed chair in history at Princeton but writes like a journalist. (A whisper to the faculty lounge: That is a compliment, not a disparagement.) His book has color and forward momentum. His story has drama and life lessons. His subject is, depending on your point of view, either heroic or odious. One way or another, no one can argue with Zelizer's thesis that Gingrich changed American politics.

"The new Washington was rougher, less stable," he writes. "In the new Washington, almost anything was permissible. In partisan politics, it was almost impossible to go too far."

Zelizer has the great insight of comprehending Gingrich's great insight: that the post-Watergate "reforms" calling for greater attention to ethical issues, greater

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## Our imaginary friend

Twitter's favorite aristocrat tells her story

By Amy Pedulla  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

"I'm trying to be quiet and gather strength to be a voice of encouragement for you loons, who somehow need me and somehow found me," tweeted Duchess Goldblatt in early June.

If you don't know who Duchess Goldblatt is: jump in the pool. The water's warm. Nobody else does, either.

This month sees the publication of "Becoming Duchess Goldblatt," an anonymously penned memoir chronicling the conception and history of Goldblatt the everyman's 81-year old therapist, self-help guru, inspirational tweeter, and, as Duchess would have it, "One of the most important voices in American letters."

The Duchess was born in the wake of the writer's own painful divorce and series of rather traumatic family events (raising a son as a single parent, losing her father to terminal illness, the disappearance of her troubled older brother). After the divorce, the writer discusses getting onto social media with a friend (we can assume this conversation happened in the mid aughts). "I wouldn't mind seeing what people are up to," she told her friend, "as long as they can't see me." An online avatar is born: Duchess Goldblatt, illustrated by a 17th-century painting titled "Por-

**BECOMING DUCHESS GOLDBLATT**  
By Anonymous  
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt,  
240 pages, \$24

**GOLDBLATT, Page N9**

### BIBLIOPHILES

## Poetry, politics, and 'Candy Crush'

BY AMY SUTHERLAND | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT



'What blew my mind my freshman year was discovering "Paradise Lost."'

**I**n "Pelosi," longtime political reporter Molly Ball charts the path that led House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to become one of the most powerful people in American politics. Ball has covered Washington politics for Politico, The Atlantic, and currently for Time magazine. She is an analyst for CNN and a regular on the PBS program "Washington Week." She lives in northern Virginia with her family.

**BOOKS:** What are you reading currently?

**BALL:** To be totally honest, between working from home, home-schooling three kids, and doing a virtual book tour, I haven't had much time for reading. I've been digging into the new Hilary Mantel, "The Mirror & the Light." I love her. I'm not usually into historical fiction, but her trilogy transcends genre. I like good books regardless of genre. I'm not into science fiction but I love Margaret Atwood, and a few years ago I got into the South American writer Jose Saramago, whose books are kind of science fiction-y.

**BOOKS:** What was your last best read before the pandemic began?

**BALL:** The last couple of books I was reading when this hit were books by friends. My colleague Charlotte Alter's "The Ones We've Been Waiting For,"

which is about millennial politicians. The writing is so evocative and the descriptions of people are really fun. The other one is Olga Khazan's "Weird," which is a social science-y book about how being different can be an asset in life. She also writes about being a nerdy Russian Jewish immigrant in Texas. She's hilarious.

**BOOKS:** Do you read many books about politics?

**BALL:** I actually don't. I mostly read literary fiction and nonfiction. Politics is my day job and I need an escape but I did read Ezra Klein's "Why We're Polarized" just before the pandemic hit. That is phenomenal.

**BOOKS:** What kind of nonfiction books are you drawn to?

**BALL:** I love nonfiction novels. "Behind the Beautiful Forevers" by Katherine

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# The incendiary politics of the '90s

► **ZELIZER**  
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openness on Capitol Hill, and greater opportunities for backbenchers to flex their muscles could be directed at the very Democrats who enacted those reforms and could be weaponized in creative and cruel ways.

The same elements of Republican rule that the Democrats deplored — promiscuous ties with lobbyists, dependence on corporate contributions, fealty to special interests — were the very elements of post-Watergate Democratic rule. Gingrich understood that, exploited that, and rode that to power.

Zelizer describes Gingrich as “extraordinarily arrogant, totally self-absorbed, and brutally ruthless.” In Congress he was an agitator, not a legislator. He understood that in an era of impatience with government it was effective to portray the House Democrats as part of the permanent political establishment. He considered bipartisanship a trap. He took on not only the Democrats but also the capital’s many totems and its multiple taboos. His mantra: “Conflict equals exposure equals power.”

Gingrich mastered conflict, he sought public exposure, and he won power. It was an astonishing achievement. It is impossible today, at the distance of a quarter-century, to comprehend the permanence and the pervasiveness of the Democratic rule on the Hill that Gingrich assailed. It was complete and unyielding. It ended up being a juicy target for an opportunist with a mission.

So Gingrich took on Speaker Thomas P. O’Neill Jr., of Cambridge, and then set his sights on a series of other Democratic mastodons, eventually targeting O’Neill’s florid, oleaginous successor, Jim Wright of Texas. “When he looked around the House at the senior Democrats and Republicans,” Zelizer writes, “he did so with disdain, pleased to have gotten under their skin.” Soon people like Phyllis Schlafly, the conservative activist and theorist, were saying that Gingrich was “one of the top strategists of the conservative movement.”

He was on his way — to destroy the Democrats’ rule and to install himself and his allies in their place. And by do-

ing so it was clear — even to those of us in the press gallery, chronicling this vital episode in American history — that, as Zelizer puts it, “the conservative movement was reshaping the political landscape, turning politicians into villains in the public imagination through their campaign to delegitimize the federal government.”

In short, this was far more than just Newt being Newt.

This is a remarkable, riveting story, one with broad consequences, even if it is true (and it is) that though “Gingrich liked to present himself as a big-idea man,” as Zelizer argues, “the truth is that his contributions as a partisan tactician were far more important than anything he did in terms of policy.”

One quibble, and it is structural rather than factual: Zelizer focuses with near-microscopic detail on the fall of Speaker Wright and Gingrich’s role in thrusting him from office. Fair enough. It probably was, as Zelizer puts it in the last sentence of this readable volume, the beginning of the end of American political civility, for “its shadow looms large and grows longer with each passing day.”

But the Wright episode is only part of the story. There is far more. It is only on the eighth-to-the-last page of this book that Zelizer introduces the Contract with America, the founding document of the new GOP Congress of 1995. The reader learns almost nothing specific, or even general, about what the Gingrich revolution wrought in the years in which he was speaker. Nor anything about Gingrich’s fall from grace, and from power. Zelizer skims lightly over the relationship Gingrich had, or has, with Donald J. Trump.

Perhaps that is fodder for another book. If Gingrich, the onetime college professor, had an attentive student, it was the man who today sits in the Oval Office.

*David Shribman, who teaches at McGill University’s Max Bell School of Public Policy, was Washington bureau chief of The Boston Globe during the Gingrich ascendancy. One of the elements of his 1995 Pulitzer Prize was his analysis of the Gingrich phenomenon.*

# Twitter’s favorite aristocrat tells her story

► **GOLDBLATT**  
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trait of an Elderly Lady,” resplendent in an Elizabethan ruff.

The writer goes to great lengths in the book to demarcate herself from the Duchess. Goldblatt is an alter ego, someone onto whom she can project her pain and have it come back in the form of jokes. An obvious model is Dorothy Parker, but in a way the writer’s creative nimbleness and insistence on anonymity brings to mind someone more like Lee Israel. (The reviewer would like to say: I would hope the Duchess takes this as a complement and not a slight, Your Grace.)

“Duchess could say things I would never say,” she writes. Or as she has tweeted, “I’m fictional, but my love is real.” And later “My love is real. I had it tested.”

Her proclamations sound like pithy lines from a standup special — that is, if the comedian was God and if God was an 81-year-old woman from the 17th century. “I’d always thought siblings were about the worst thing you could ever do to a kid.” Or: “Nobody ever gets anything they want in life, Lucy never got to be in the nightclub act, Ethel deserved better than Fred. Sure, Lucy and Ethel got fired from the candy factory but it was a terrible job anyway.”

What’s most astonishing is the relationship Duchess has with her community (upward of 25,000 followers on Twitter at last count). They find her amusing, comforting, assuring. One writes: “You make even the loneliest feel important, thank you.” Indeed, the Duchess replies to every single comment and tweet directed at her. She reads everything, and responds to everything. Her followers are as faithful to her as she is to them.

Another commenter writes: “I was scrolling through your feed, as I sometimes do, looking for comfort. It cheered me up to see the entries for the Duchess Goldblatt Dog show.” One can almost picture Duchess Goldblatt as a character in Christopher Guest’s film “Best in Show.” There’s an air of the mocku-

mentary around the entire production.

“I’m the one who knows she’s really making fun of me,” she writes in the memoir, “and it always makes me laugh to myself, even though I’m, technically, the one doing it.” As much as the Duchess and the writer are not the same, a lot of biography and fiction get dropped in a cocktail shaker and poured over Twitter: “For my visit to the Dorothy Parker Academy, I’m trying to choose one of the more joyful Christmas carols about the divorce discovery process.”

Through the course of the memoir the writer, perhaps more than Duchess, learns to be honest about her past and the pain in it: “My father’s memory is a blessing and a balm. When the Duchess is at her best, he’s alive again.” And she admits that part of anonymity is self-preservation: “If people can’t find you, they can’t break your heart.”

Originally used as a tool to deal with her own trauma, over time the Duchess has mutated into something more like a movement. Duchess Goldblatt is a kind of way to rewrite the ways we treat ourselves and the people around us. The writer admits to a very famous friend she meets at one point in the book that the Duchess “whispers” little prayers to each of her followers.

The writer articulates near the end that there must be a holy contract between the reader and the Duchess. She only exists if they believe in her. “Every day of my life I am real and you are fictional. You only exist for me inside my mind. Isn’t that fiction?”

It’s loving the bizarre and cherishing the weird that Goldblatt does best. And it’s why so many people trust her to tell them how to live, how to treat themselves with more compassion, how to treat each other better, too.

“Don’t let anybody shame you for your love of an imaginary friend,” she writes. “Religions have been founded on less.”

*Amy Pedulla is a writer and radio producer.*



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# LESSONS IN POWER

Lacy Crawford’s memoir ‘Notes on a Silencing’ examines a long-buried crime at St. Paul’s School

By **Kerri Arsenault**  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Lacy Crawford’s story is as common as a housefly. As a 15-year-old girl, she was sexually assaulted.

Two older male students at St. Paul’s, the elite boarding school Crawford attended at the time, lured her to their room and forced their penises down her throat. Her abusers went unpunished. Even after they bragged about their assault. Even after Crawford told her parents and her parents told St. Paul’s. Even after she contracted herpes from the attack. Even after decades. Crawford was scapegoated, shunned. She absorbed the blame, became depressed, took Prozac. She was silenced: by the school, the law, her parents, threats, time. So what makes her story special? Its very ordinariness. (One in approximately six females is the victim of rape or attempted rape in the United States, most of which occur before the age of 25.)

In “Notes on a Silencing,” Crawford lays bare the impact of violence on identity. She navigates her trauma surgically by trying to establish the parameters of its lexicon — was it rape, assault, aggravated assault, aggravated felonious assault, intercourse, nonconsensual sex? — then interrogating the terms in which to define herself, as so many sexual assault victims do. Crawford pries open the underpinnings of her childhood, which operated in the taxonomy of wealth and privilege. “We were blessed with excellence and excellently blessed,” she writes, imbued “with the Calvinistic confidence that is actually a threat: if you do not become spectacular, it means you are not us.” Hers is a “goodly heritage” of “rigorously enforced manners” with blue ribbons pinned to a bulletin board of upper-class advantage. “Everything was coded,” she thinks, but she is still too naïve to know the codes. For her there is, as Jean-Paul Sartre wrote and whom she began reading at the time, *Huis Clos*, “No Exit” for the existential crisis in

**NOTES ON A SILENCING: A Memoir**  
By Lacy Crawford  
Little, Brown, 392 pages, \$28

which she finds herself.

To reveal the assault, she believes, will ruin a future she had just begun to see. She isn’t completely wrong. When she finally tells her parents from St. Paul’s, their reaction is swift. “We are going to bring you home,” they say, but Crawford protests. She wants to be unnoticed, take her final exams, and live up to the discipline she had lived all her life. Her parents comply.

The book underscores the complicated and oppressive machinations of a young girl’s sexuality. For the family holiday photo, her mother buys Crawford a black velvet dress “belted tightly at the waist.” When Crawford models it, her parents are agog at her body’s development, made evident by the fit of the dress. “Oh” her mother said with a pursed pause. “It’s just that it’s inappropriate for a girl your age to have breasts that large. Maybe we could try another dress?” Soon after, the family drives to St. Louis from Chicago to visit Crawford’s grandparents for Thanksgiving. Crawford brings her Walkman, a pillow, and the remains of her baby blanket “Nigh Nigh” along for the ride. “Much too old for that stuff,” her grandmother comments upon seeing the tattered cloth. When she carries her things into the house upon returning home, Crawford can’t locate Nigh Nigh. She never sees it again.

Crawford is made to feel simultaneously promiscuous and infantile, with no consideration of the liminal space she is actually in. This refraction is part of the same old tropes of women being expected to be both Madonna and whore, virginal and sexual all at once, or one or the other, while being slut-shamed or pedestaled for either role. This grab bag of expectations feeds into Crawford’s confusion and shame, so that when a male family friend gropes her in a

predatory way, she’s unsure what to do. She begins to sense danger in every man.

When Crawford returns to school she is whiplashed by whispered scorn and ostracized by friends “giddy with hate.” In response, she leans into schoolwork and makes herself “as silent and as slender” as she can until her invisibility is almost complete. The rigor and elegance of Crawford’s sentences, even while writing about such painful things, lifts this memoir into literary heights. “I could do nothing about it except hoist up my book bag and walk away, sporting my freckles and a hankering for the Ivy League.”

St. Paul’s does not report the assault to the local police, which they are required to do. The boys’ varsity lacrosse coach asks the team to visit the infirmary if they were intimate with Crawford. In fact, the team knows about Crawford’s herpes before she does. Calls to St. Paul’s go unreturned and the school threatens her with unfounded and absurd accusations unless and until her family rescinds its claims. Even her injury — herpes — adds to the silencing, because it’s a lifelong secret you can’t see. Again and again and again, for as long as there is nobody to blame or to call to account, Crawford blames herself. Until she wrote this book: at last, the story of her own design.

For a place that carried many secrets, St. Paul’s had no locks on the dorm room doors, leaving its most valuable cargo — the students — exposed. But with the help of therapy, detectives, records she thought lost to time, and a new case brought to the fore, Crawford is forcing the unchecked power of an elite institution to answer for their violations and the victims they shoved into silent hallways of despair.

*Kerri Arsenault is the book review editor at Orion Magazine, contributing editor at Lit Hub, and her first book, Mill Town (St. Martin’s Press), will be published in September.*

# Poetry, politics, and ‘Candy Crush’

► **BIBLIOPHILES**  
*Continued from Page N8*

Boo is one of my favorite books of all time. That’s such a deeply researched book. “Random Family” by Adrian Nicole LeBlanc is another all-time favorite. It’s like 900 pages long but it’s so riveting.

**BOOKS:** Who are your favorite novelists?

**BALL:** Growing up, my favorite writer was James Jones, who wrote “From Here to Eternity.” As an adult I’ve gravitated to more women writers. I devoured the Elena Ferrante books. I love Alice Munro. My favorite book of the last 10 years was “Netherland” by Joseph O’Neill. It’s about cricket and 9/11, two subjects that interest me barely at all, but it’s so beautifully written. I picked it up because it was on Barack Obama’s reading list. I’m not necessarily an Obama fan but he has a good taste in writing.

**BOOKS:** Did you read any biographies as background for your own book?

**BALL:** There’s a great biography of one of Pelosi’s political role models, Philip Burton, “A Rage for Justice” by John Jacobs. He’s a fascinating character. Another friend of mine, Sally Bedell Smith, has written a number of great biographies. I read her book about Prince Charles, which is really interesting even for someone who’s not at all interested in British royalty.

**BOOKS:** What else do you read?

**BALL:** I was an English major in college and read poetry almost exclusively though I took a class on Joseph Conrad that changed my life. My thesis was on James Merrill. What blew my mind my freshman year was discovering “Paradise Lost.” I became obsessed with Milton. “Paradise Lost” is still one of my favorites.

**BOOKS:** Which poets do you read now?

**BALL:** I have a couple of shelves in my home library that I will dip into to soothe my mind. I always go back to Philip Larkin. I have a lot of his poems memorized and recite them to myself when I can’t sleep. I also go back to Merrill. A.E. Stallings is a poet I like who’s working today. She’s American but lives in Greece. She’s a formalist but does some interesting things with the form.

**BOOKS:** What do you read for a guilty pleasure?

**BALL:** I don’t read for a guilty pleasure. My guilty pleasure is “Candy Crush.”

*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

THE STORY BEHIND THE BOOK | KATE TUTTLE

## Gail Caldwell on friendship, feminism, and survival

Gail Caldwell had already written three memoirs. “I always say I’ll never do this again,” she said. “But then, I’m a writer. So something starts to happen.”

Her latest book, “Bright Precious Thing,” began as a series of essays, touching on friendship, feminism, and survival. She wrote, Caldwell said, “from my late sixties looking back into the late ‘60s. I started to see the paths that I had taken as much more defined by my gender and my experience with the early women’s movement than I had ever really written about.”

The shorter pieces she was writing gained urgency during and after the 2016 election. “I felt the way writers often feel, which is utterly helpless,” she said. “The only thing I had is my voice.”

Although the book travels down some dark roads — including more than one experience while hitchhiking — there is a sweetness at its heart, primarily due to the relationship Caldwell describes with a neighbor child who has become her dear friend. “This amazing child! She fell into my life,” Caldwell said. Dubbed Tyler in the book (not her real



DAVID WILSON FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

name) she is Caldwell’s buddy and inspiration, a fellow fan of dogs and words.

“I live in Mr. Rogers’ neighborhood for hippies,” said Caldwell, a Cambridge resident and formerly the Globe’s chief book critic. “As a single woman in her sixties, milling about my house with my dog and my garden, Tyler was a subject to me of such transformative joy and victory and jaw-dropping amazement.” Now 10, the girl listened to Caldwell read every word of the book about her, and approved. She’s not old enough yet to read the whole book.

The other great love in the book is for dogs. “I have this profound respect for human-animal relationships,” she said. “Our relationship to nature and what it teaches us about death and rebirth: that matters to me more and more and everything else matters less and less as I age.”

*Gail Caldwell will be in conversation with Gloria Steinem at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, July 7, at a virtual event hosted by Harvard Book Store. See [www.harvard.com](http://www.harvard.com) for details.*

*Kate Tuttle, a freelance writer and critic, can be reached at [kate.tuttle@gmail.com](mailto:kate.tuttle@gmail.com).*

### BOOKINGS

*The events listed are virtual author readings and appearances. To attend these events please visit the bookstores’ websites.*

#### SUNDAY

**Elin Kelsey** (“A Last Goodbye”) reads at 10:30 a.m. at Brookline Booksmith.

#### MONDAY

**Stephanie Burt** (“After Callimachus: Poems”) is in conversation with University of Chicago professor **Mark Payne** at 7 p.m. at Harvard Book Store...

**Charlotte Pence** (“Code”) is in conversation with **John Skoyles** and **Gail Mazur** (“Land’s End”) at 7 p.m. at Brookline Booksmith.

#### TUESDAY

**Gail Caldwell** (“Bright Precious Thing: A Memoir”) is in conversation with **Gloria Steinem** (“The Truth Will Set You Free, But First It Will Piss You Off”) at 7 p.m. at Harvard Book Store... **Rory Power** (“Burn our Bodies Down”) reads at 7 p.m. at Brookline Booksmith... **Meg Mitchell Moore** (“Two Truths and a Lie”) reads at 7 p.m. at Belmont Books.

#### WEDNESDAY

**Steven Levy** (“Facebook: The Inside Story”) is in conversation with Harvard professor Lawrence Lessig at 7 p.m. at Harvard Book Store... Co-authors **Joseph Nevins**, **Suren Moodilar**, and **Eleni Macrakis** (“A People’s Guide to Greater Boston”) read at 7 p.m. at Brookline Booksmith... **Angie Kim** (“Miracle Creek”) and **Lisa Gornick** (“The Peacock Feast”) read at 7 p.m. at Belmont Books... **Danica McKellar** (“The Times Machine!”) reads at 7 p.m. at Unlikely Story.

#### THURSDAY

**Eric Swalwell** (“Endgame: Inside the Impeachment of Donald J. Trump”) is in conversation with Congressman **Joe Kennedy III** at 7 p.m. at Harvard Book Store.

#### FRIDAY

**Brad Fox** (“To Remain Nameless: A Novel”) is in conversation with **Claire Messud** (“The Emperor’s Children”) at 7 p.m. at Harvard Book Store.

#### SATURDAY

**Valerie Bolling** (“Let’s Dance!”) reads at 11 a.m. on the Brookline Booksmith Instagram.

*Some events may require online registration. Send announcements to [boston.globe](mailto:boston.globe). [bookings@gmail.com](mailto:bookings@gmail.com) at least two weeks before event date. Events are subject to change.*

### WHAT YOU’RE READING

#### Eyes on history

I have recently read two books by local authors. The first book is “**No Common War**,” by Luke Salisbury. He wrote a novel about two relatives who fought with the 24th N.Y. Volunteers during the Civil War. The most recent book I read is by Glen Johnson (a former Globe reporter) called “**Window Seat on the World**.” It’s an invaluable book if you want an understanding of how the State Department practices diplomacy. Mr. Johnson was the official (travel) photographer to Secretary of State John Kerry for four years.

— Dean Contover, Chelmsford

#### Two from McBride

After reading “**Deacon King Kong**” by James McBride, I read his “**Song Yet Sung**.” His dialogue captures exactly how enslaved people, slave owners, and slave-catchers must have talked — plus an exciting story about a fictional ancestor of Martin Luther King.

— Donald Caplin, Waltham

*Write us at [books@globe.com](mailto:books@globe.com) to tell us what you are reading these days.*

NEW ENGLAND LITERARY NEWS | NINA MACLAUGHLIN



MICHAEL PHILIP MANHEIM. COURTESY OF THE U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Images from “A People’s Guide to Greater Boston”: Families playing on Neptune Road, a street that abutted Logan Airport. An anti-nuclear power demonstration in Kendall Square in 1974.

### Radical roadmap

“A People’s Guide to Greater Boston” (University of California) is not a glossy pit of tired tourist pap. It’s a history lesson with a point of view, shining light on the city’s radical past, highlighting protests and movements and the power people of Boston have had in shaping the place they live. Authors Joseph Nevins, who grew up in Dorchester; Suren Moodilar, an activist and editor who lives in Chelsea; and Cambridge native and Harvard grad Eleni Macrakis write of sites like Grove Hall in Dorchester, where in June 1967, 50 protestors locked themselves in to demand welfare reform and were pulled out violently by police, leading to three days of rioting. Or of the Middle East Nightclub in Cambridge, which used to be home to “Old Mole,” an underground newspaper that called itself “a radical biweekly.” The book is a comprehensive exploration of Boston, its neighborhoods, and its nearby towns—Waltham, Lynn, Concord, the North and South Shores. The book pulls the curtain back on the city’s history of furthering the inequality of a capitalist world economy and perpetrating violence against natural resources. “A people’s perspective privileges the desires, hopes, and struggles of those



SPENCER GRANT

on the receiving end of unjust forms of power and those who work to challenge such inequalities” aiming for a place “that is radically inclusive and democratic and that centers on social and environmental justice.” It’s a timely, intelligent, and necessary guide, one that deepens our understanding of where we live now and reminds us of the power that regular citizens have to work against powers and systems that are, now as then, in urgent need of change.

### Medical memoir

“I claim no special powers; nor do I know how to handle death any better than you,” writes Harvard grad and ER doctor Michele Harper in her wise and elegant debut memoir, “**The Beauty in Breaking**” (Riverhead), which comes out this week. Harper writes of cultivating a state of stillness, one that serves her well in the ER, and one she learned in childhood living with an abusive, battering father. She writes candidly of what it is to be Black in the primarily white medical system, the lie of a post-racial America, and a glass ceiling for women that doesn’t so much shatter as bow. Wrenching scenes are balanced with Harper’s confident and steadying prose. “It is only in silence that horror can persist,” she writes.

### Fellowships and grants

The Mass Cultural Council recently announced the recipients of its annual artist fellowships for fiction and creative non-fiction. Out of over 600 applications, the judges selected 13 Massachusetts-based writers. Seven writers were awarded grants of \$15k each, including Morris Collins of Boston, Kelle Groom of Provincetown, Daniel E. Robb of Amherst, Whitney Scharer of Arlington, Emily Shelton of Cambridge, Ann Ward of Shutesbury, and Linda Woolford of Andover. Six writers were awarded \$1500, including Robert Dall of Cambridge, Justine Dymond of Belchertown, Amanda L. Giracca of Great Barrington, Matthew Muller of Pittsfield, Chivas Sandage of Northampton, and Alyssa Songsiridej of Cambridge. The National Endowment for the Arts also recently announced their grants awarded to literary arts organizations. In New England, the Boston Book Festival received a \$15k grant. Grub Street receives \$45k. And the Telling Room in Portland receives \$15k.

### Coming out

“**Want**” by Lynn Steger Strong (Henry Holt)

“**Last One Out Shut Off the Lights**” by Stephanie Sotileau (Little, Brown)

“**A Mind Spread Out on the Ground**” by Alicia Elliott (Melville House)

### Pick of the week

Roxie Mack at Broadside Books in Northampton recommends “**I Hotel**” by Karen Tei Yamashita (Coffee House): “‘I Hotel’ is a fictional account of the lives of Asian-American activists in the late 60s and early 70s. Mirroring the fearless experimentalism of the time, Yamashita tells the story using a mix of narrative, drama, and real and fictionalized documentary passages. The story, based in many instances on actual incidents, traces the intertwined lives of a generation of Chinese, Japanese, Pilipino, and Korean revolutionaries. She brings to light intriguing parallels between the then-emerging Black Power movement and the Asian activists.”

*Nina MacLaughlin is the author of “Wake, Siren.” She can be reached at [nmaclaughlin@gmail.com](mailto:nmaclaughlin@gmail.com).*

### LOCAL BESTSELLERS

#### HARDCOVER

##### FICTION

1. **The Vanishing Half** Brit Bennett RIVERHEAD BOOKS
2. **28 Summers** Elin Hilderbrand LITTLE BROWN
3. **A Burning** Megha Majumdar KNOPF
4. **The Dutch House** Ann Patchett HARPER
5. **Death in Her Hands** Ottessa Moshfegh PENGUIN PRESS
6. **Where the Crawdads Sing** Delia Owens PUTNAM
7. **American Dirt** Jeanine Cummins FLATIRON BOOKS
8. **Such a Fun Age** Kiley Reid PUTNAM
9. **All Adults Here** Emma Straub RIVERHEAD BOOKS
10. **Deacon King Kong** James McBride RIVERHEAD BOOKS

##### NONFICTION

1. **How to Be an Antiracist** Ibram X. Kendi ONE WORLD
2. **The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir** John Bolton S&S
3. **Me and White Supremacy** Layla Saad SOURCEBOOKS
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#### PAPERBACK

##### FICTION

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2. **The Overstory** Richard Powers NORTON
3. **Circe** Madeline Miller BACK BAY
4. **Little Fires Everywhere** Celeste Ng PENGUIN
5. **Beach Read** Emily Henry BERKELEY
6. **The Underground Railroad** Colson Whitehead ANCHOR
7. **City of Girls** Elizabeth Gilbert RIVERHEAD BOOKS
8. **Americanah** Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie ANCHOR
9. **A Gentleman in Moscow** Amor Towles PENGUIN
10. **The Tattooist of Auschwitz** Heath Morris HARPER

##### NONFICTION

1. **White Fragility** Robin DiAngelo BEACON PRESS
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8. **Born a Crime** Trevor Noah ONE WORLD
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