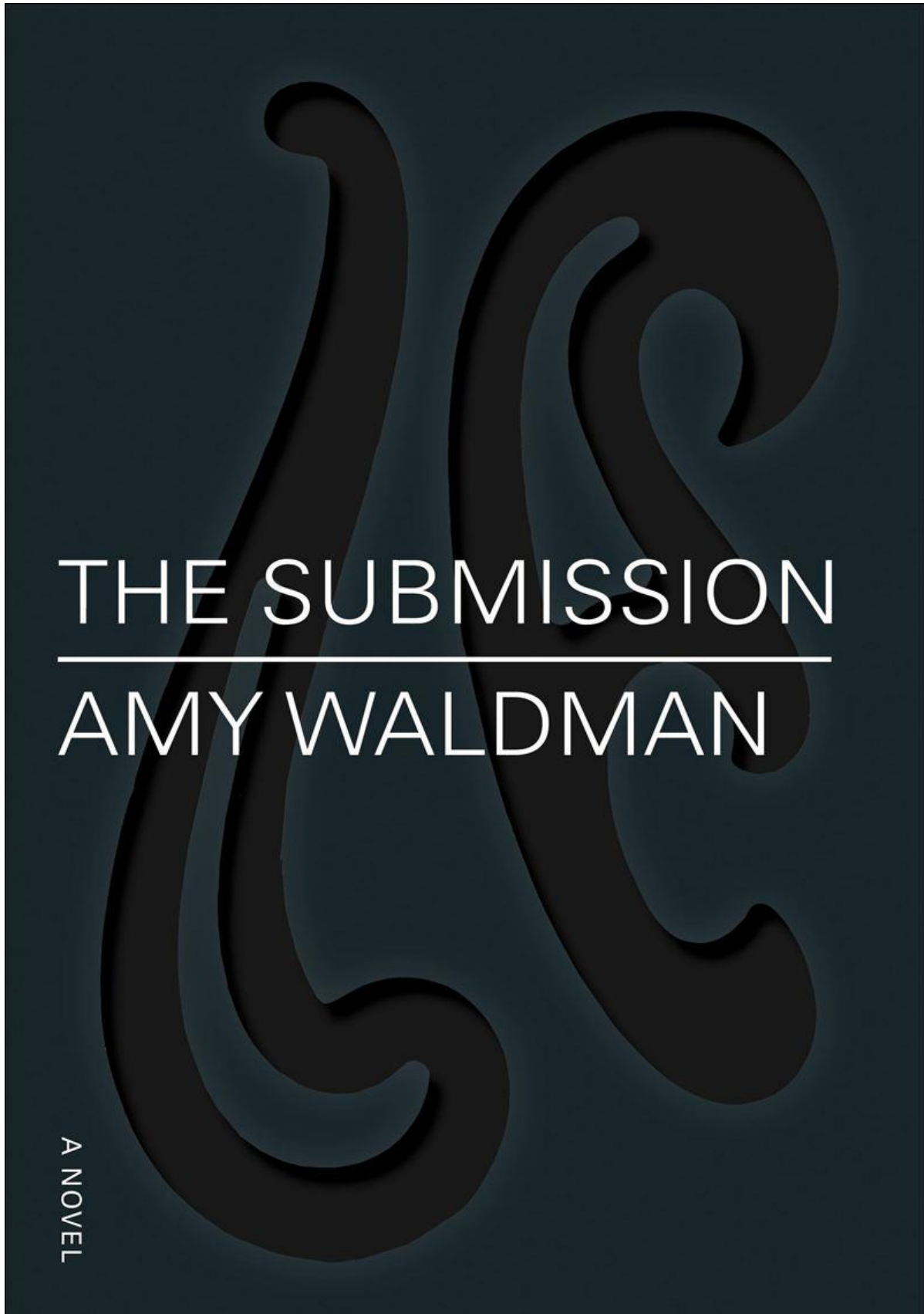


About the Book



Ten years after 9/11, a dazzling, kaleidoscopic novel reimagines its aftermath.

A jury gathers in Manhattan to select a memorial for the victims of a devastating terrorist attack. Their fraught deliberations complete, the jurors open the envelope containing the anonymous winner's name--and discover he is an American Muslim.

***Instantly they are cast into roiling debate about the claims of grief, the ambiguities of art, and the meaning of Islam. The memorial's designer is an enigmatic, ambitious architect named Mohammad Khan. His fiercest defender on the jury is its sole widow, the self-possessed and mediagenic Claire Burwell. But when the news of his selection leaks to the press, she finds herself under pressure from outraged family members and in collision with hungry journalists, wary activists, opportunistic politicians, fellow jurors, and Khan himself. --
Syndetics***

About the Author (thesubmissionnovel.com)

[*The Submission*](#), Amy Waldman's first novel, was published in 2011. It was named a finalist for the Hemingway Foundation/PEN First Fiction Award; a New York Times Notable Book for 2011; one of National Public Radio's Ten Best Novels; Esquire's Book of the Year; Entertainment Weekly's #1 Novel for the Year; a Washington Post Notable Fiction Book; and one of Amazon's Top 100 Books and top ten debut fiction. It was a finalist for the Guardian (UK) First Book Award and was long listed for the Orange Prize. It has been or will be published in Brazil, Italy, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, India, South Africa, Canada, Japan, Portugal, Sweden, Norway, and the Netherlands.

Amy's fiction also has appeared in the Atlantic, the Boston Review and the Financial Times, and was anthologized in The Best American Non-Required Reading 2010.

Amy was a reporter for The New York Times for eight years, including three as co-chief of the New Delhi bureau. She was also a national correspondent for the Atlantic.

She graduated from Yale University and has been a fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study and at the American Academy in Berlin. She lives with her family in Brooklyn.

Fiction

- *Trotter's Road*
- *Freedom*

Non-Fiction

- *Prophetic Justice*

Reviews

Booklist

After venomous deliberations over anonymous design submissions for a 9/11 memorial at ground zero, the jury selects an elegant garden as the ideal embodiment of remembrance and rebirth. But when the identity of the architect is revealed—Mohammad Khan, the American son of Muslim immigrants from India—the dream of national healing warps into a hysterical nightmare. As public outrage ignites, entangled characters struggle with anger, fear, conscience, and ambition. Mohammad, called Mo, is stubborn and aloof. Journalist Alyssa is desperate to capitalize on the excoriating scandal. Down-and-out Sean, who lost his firefighter brother, flounders as spokesperson for the victims' families, while two young 9/11 widows—Claire, wealthy and glamorous, and Asma, an illegal immigrant from Bangladesh—push through grief to try to do the right thing. In her magnetizing first novel, replete with searing insights and exquisite metaphors, Waldman, formerly a New York Times reporter and co-chief of the South Asia bureau, maps shadowy psychological terrain and a vast social minefield as conflicted men and women confront life-and-death moral quandaries within the glare

and din of a media carnival. Waldman brilliantly delineates the legacy of 9/11; the confluence of art, religion, and politics; the plexus between the individual and the group; and the glory of transcendent empathy in *The Bonfire of the Vanities* for our time. — Donna Seaman

Publisher's Weekly

Waldman imagines a toxic brew of bigotry in conflict with idealism in this frighteningly plausible and tightly wound account of what might happen if a Muslim architect had won a contest to design a memorial at the World Trade Center site. Jury member and 9/11 widow Claire Burwell presses for the winning garden design both before and after its creator is revealed as Mohammed "Mo" Khan, an American-born and raised architect who becomes embroiled in the growing furor between those who see the garden as a symbol of tolerance and peace, and various activists who claim patriotism as they spew anti-Islamic diatribes. Waldman keenly focuses on political and social variables, including an opportunistic governor who abets the outbreak of xenophobia; the wealthy chairman of the contest, maneuvering for social cachet; a group of zealots whose obsession with radical Islam foments violence; a beautiful Iranian-American lawyer who becomes Mo's lover until he refuses to become a mouthpiece; and a trouble-sowing tabloid reporter. Meanwhile, Mo refuses to demean himself by explaining the source of his design, seen by some as an Islamic martyr's paradise. As misguided outrage flows from all corners, Waldman addresses with a refreshing frankness thorny moral questions and ethical ironies without resorting to breathless hyperbole. True,

there are more blowhards than heroes, but that just makes it all the more real.

Kirkus Review

The selection of a Muslim architect for a 9/11 memorial stirs a media circus in Waldman's poised and commanding debut novel.

The jury assembled to select a design for a memorial in Manhattan represented every important interest group: a 9/11 widow, an art critic, a governor's representative and other major stakeholders. They considered blind submissions before arriving at a garden-themed design. The one contingency they didn't plan for was that the winner would be a Muslim, Mohammad Khan. Though he's not especially religious and his bona fides as an architect are impeccable, Khan still becomes a target for anti-Islam firebrands, and even his defenders are left wringing their hands. Waldman skillfully presents the perspectives of a handful of major characters, including Claire, a 9/11 widow; Sean, a pugnacious victims' activist who lost his brother in the attacks; and Mohammad, who vacillates between gloomy isolation and outspoken defiance at attempts to reject or tweak his design. Waldman shrewdly, subtly reveals the class and race divisions that spark arguments about who "owns" the design; it's no accident that wealthy Claire played a leading role on the jury while Asma, a working-class Bangladeshi woman who lost her husband in the attacks as well, is all but unheard.

Waldman, a former New York Times reporter, discusses 9/11 victims, memorial gardens and Muslim-American life, but her keenest observations are of the media. She has a

canny understanding of how a New York Post front page can stoke right-wing rage, or how a New York Times article can muddy the waters. There's a slight cartoonishness to her characterizations of cub reporters and radio hosts, but overall this is a remarkably assured portrait of how a populace grows maddened and confused when ideology trumps empathy.

A stellar debut. Waldman's book reflects a much-needed understanding of American paranoia in the post-9/11 world.

Discussion Questions (thesubmissionnovel.com)

- 1.** What do you think the purpose and message of a national memorial should be? Would you have voted for the Void or the Garden?
- 2.** Reread the epigraph. What do its words suggest about the relationship between nature and human nature?
- 3.** As Claire tries to explain the tragedy to William (and, in a way, to Penelope), what does she discover about her own beliefs and feelings?
- 4.** Mo is under considerable pressure to give the "right" reasons when asked why he entered the competition, but he defies simplistic answers. What does his design communicate on its own? For any creative work—including novels—should the author's biography matter to us? Do you think

he was obligated to explain himself and his design? Why or why not?

5. Chapter 16 begins with a depiction of Mo's hunger and thirst during Ramadan. We're told, "The truth was he didn't know why he was doing it." How does it affect him, a secular skeptic, to join Muslims worldwide in observing the fast?

6. How did your reactions shift as Sean's story unfolded, especially as he struggled with conflicting feelings after pulling Zahira's scarf? Is bigotry excusable if it's coming from someone whose loved one was the victim of a horrific crime? What are the limits of a survivor's rights?

7. Asma's memories of Inam are her private inheritance, and she must rely on translators to convey her messages in English. Did anyone in the novel have a truly accurate understanding of her suffering? How was her mourning experience different from Claire's and Sean's? What common emotions do all of the novel's survivors share?

8. Many of the characters desperately want someone to blame for their loss. The final line of chapter 22, referring to Alyssa, reads, "She is responsible." Ultimately, who is responsible for the tragedies depicted in the novel?

9. What would you have done in Paul Rubin's situation? Was it courageous or insensitive of him to permit Mo's submission to move forward?

10. A journalist, Amy Waldman had special insight into Alyssa's world. What does the novel tell us about the role of the media (exploited by all parties involved) and the impact of a free press in the information age?

11. How does Claire's sense of self change when Jack reappears in her life? Did Cal, despite his wealth, cost her an important part of her identity?

12. Discuss the novel's title. To what (and to whom) must the characters submit? Who are the novel's most and least submissive characters?

13. An uproar erupted in 2010 when Park51, a community center housing a mosque, was proposed for construction two blocks from Ground Zero. What does this conflict—and the one described in *The Submission*—suggest about how 9/11 might have transformed American society? (Note: Amy Waldman began writing *The Submission* several years before Park51 was announced.)

14. What makes fiction a powerful way to explore events that shaped our lives? What can a novel achieve that journalism and testimonials can't?

15. In the final “dialogue” between Claire and Mo, orchestrated by Molly and William, is anything resolved? What does the closing image of a cairn show us about the heart of the novel, and the role of future generations in resolving history?

Read-Alikes

Lionel Shriver, [*The New Republic*](#) (2012)

A man fights for popularity and success in the midst of terrorism and journalistic deadlines in this satirical novel from author Lionel Shriver. Edgar Kellogg has spent his entire life living in the shadows of more magnetic, charismatic, and popular men, and he's been desperate since childhood to join their ranks. Eager for some excitement and respect, Kellogg leaves his lucrative law career behind to try his hand at journalism. When he's offered a job as a foreign correspondent on a Portuguese peninsula overrun by terrorism, he jumps at the chance. The previous reporter covering the area, a larger-than-life stringer that everyone loves, has disappeared and Kellogg hopes to take on his mantle. But as Kellogg researches the terrorist cell in the area, he finds shocking connections between the violent activity and the reporter's disappearance.

Warren Lehrer and Judith Sloan, *Crossing the BLVD* (2003)

A kaleidoscopic view of new immigrants and refugees living in Queens, New York the most ethnically diverse locality in the United States. For three years, Warren Lehrer and Judith Sloan traveled the world by trekking the streets of their home borough. This book documents the people they encountered along the way. First person narratives are illuminated by strikingly direct photographic portraits of the subjects alongside the objects of their worlds. Lehrer's postmodern, Talmudic design juxtaposes the multiple perspectives of these new Americans, now thrown together as neighbors, classmates, coworkers, enemies, and friends. They reflect on the good, the ugly and the unexpected in their stories of crossing oceans, borders, wars, economic hardship, and cultural divides. These soulful narratives are put in context by the authors' personal and historical observations. The voices, images and sounds collected here form a portrait of a paradoxical and ever-shifting America.

Jonathan Safran Foer, [*Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*](#) (2005)

A new novel by the author of *Everything Is Illuminated* introduces Oskar Schell, the nine-year-old son of a man killed in the World Trade Center bombing who searches the city for a lock that fits a black key his father left behind. Jonathan Safran Foer emerged as one of the most original writers of his generation with his best-selling debut novel, *Everything Is Illuminated*. Now, with humor, tenderness, and awe, he confronts the traumas of our recent history. What he discovers is solace in that most human quality,

imagination. Meet Oskar Schell, an inventor, Francophile, tambourine player, Shakespearean actor, jeweler, pacifist, correspondent with Stephen Hawking and Ringo Starr. He is nine years old. And he is on an urgent, secret search through the five boroughs of New York. His mission is to find the lock that fits a mysterious key belonging to his father, who died in the World Trade Center on 9/11. An inspired innocent, Oskar is alternately endearing, exasperating, and hilarious as he careens from Central Park to Coney Island to Harlem on his search. Along the way he is always dreaming up inventions to keep those he loves safe from harm. What about a birdseed shirt to let you fly away? What if you could actually hear everyone's heartbeat? His goal is hopeful, but the past speaks a loud warning in stories of those who've lost loved ones before. As Oskar roams New York, he encounters a motley assortment of humanity who are all survivors in their own way. He befriends a 103-year-old war reporter, a tour guide who never leaves the Empire State Building, and lovers enraptured or scorned. Ultimately, Oskar ends his journey where it began, at his father's grave. But now he is accompanied by the silent stranger who has been renting the spare room of his grandmother's apartment. They are there to dig up his father's empty coffin.

Thomas L. Friedman, *Key of Knowledge* (2003)

"History just took a right turn into a blind alley," comments the New York Times columnist in his latest book, "and something very dear has just been taken away from us." Tackling this observation from many different angles, this

lucid book, consisting of Friedman's exceptionally frank and convincing columns and an insightful post-September 11 diary, prods at the questions surrounding that day and offers an invaluable reporter's perspective on the world from outside U.S. borders. The columns, which are the bulk of the book, represent a comprehensive album of the past two years ranging from the usefulness of building a missile shield to analyzing the structure of Arab societies yet they rarely stray from the central theme of promoting thoughtful and measured consideration of the U.S.' role in the world. However, the previously unpublished diary offers the most insight to the state of the world after September 11. Stranded in Israel during the attacks, Friedman ended up traveling throughout the Middle East, discovering how the terrorist attacks affected the region and uncovering many of the roots of anti-American sentiment, which he aptly describes alongside his reflections on watching his daughter's multicultural middle-school chorus sing "God Bless America."

Susan Faludi, [*The Terror Dream : Fear and Fantasy in Post-9/11 America*](#)

From the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and bestselling author of Backlash --an unflinching dissection of the mind of America after 9/11 In this most original examination of America's post-9/11 culture, Susan Faludi shines a light on the country's psychological response to the attacks on that

terrible day. Turning her acute observational powers on the media, popular culture, and political life, Faludi unearths a barely acknowledged but bedrock societal drama shot through with baffling contradictions. Why, she asks, did our culture respond to an assault against American global dominance with a frenzied summons to restore "traditional" manhood, marriage, and maternity? Why did we react as if the hijackers had targeted not a commercial and military edifice but the family home and nursery? Why did an attack fueled by hatred of Western emancipation lead us to a regressive fixation on Doris Day womanhood and John Wayne masculinity, with trembling "security moms," swaggering presidential gunslingers, and the "rescue" of a female soldier cast as a "helpless little girl"? The answer, Faludi finds, lies in a historical anomaly unique to the American experience: the nation that in recent memory has been least vulnerable to domestic attack was forged in traumatizing assaults by nonwhite "barbarians" on town and village. That humiliation lies concealed under a myth of cowboy bluster and feminine frailty, which is reanimated whenever threat and shame looms. Brilliant and important, *The Terror Dream* shows what 9/11 revealed about us--and offers the opportunity to look at ourselves anew.

Watch-Alikes

[*Hijacking Catastrophe : 9/11, Fear & the Selling of American Empire* \(2004\)](#)

Interviews with Scott Ritter, Daniel Ellsberg, Jody Williams, Norman Mailer, Noam Chomsky, Medea Benjamin, Mark Crispin Miller, William Hartung, Vandana Shiva, Kevin Danaher, Chalmers Johnson, Benjamin Barber, Stan Goff. This film discusses how the events of 9/11/2001 have influenced United States politics, from advancing a pre-existing military agenda to rolling back civil liberties and social programs. This documentary features interviews with leading commentators on the events of 9/11 and the war in Iraq.

[*Great Courses: The United States and the Middle East, 1914 to 9/11*](#) (2003)

This course is a narrative history of U.S. political involvement in the Middle East from World War I to the present day. Presented from a historian's perspective, it is meant to strengthen your ability to place today's events into historical context, evaluate what is most likely to happen next, and understand those oncoming events when they do occur. Topics covered include: the Arab-Israeli conflict superpower rivalry decolonization and Arab nationalism Islamic revivalism the background and meaning of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The lectures also examine how the different agendas of Arabs, Iranians, Turks, Jews, Kurds, and other groups have affected their relationships with the U.S.

[*A Mighty Heart*](#) (2009)

On January 23, 2002, Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl is to fly from Karachi to Dubai with his pregnant wife, Mariane. She is also a reporter. On the day they are to leave, Daniel carefully arranged an interview in a café with an Islamic fundamentalist cleric. When Daniel doesn't return, Mariane initiates a search. The Pakistani police, American embassy personnel, and the FBI examine witnesses, phone records, e-mails, and hard drives in an effort to discover who has him. They find that some of the reasons behind his kidnapping are based on the the U.S. abuse of prisoners at Guantanamo, because of a history of Journal cooperation with the CIA, and possibly because Pearl is a Jew. Nine days later he is murdered and beheaded. Through it all, Mariane is clearheaded, direct, and determined. Based on a true story.

[Homeland](#) (2011)

Hailed as TV's best new drama by critics everywhere, the award-winning Homeland delivers compelling characters, thrilling twists and breathtaking suspense. Carrie Mathison (Golden Globber winner Claire Danes), a brilliant but volatile CIA agent, suspects that a rescued American POW may not be what he seems. Is Marine Sgt. Nicholas Brody (Damian Lewis) a war hero...or an Al Qaeda sleeper agent plotting a spectacular terrorist attack on U.S. soil? Following her instincts, Mathison will risk everything to uncover the truth - her reputation, her career and even her sanity. Packed with multiple layers and hidden clues, Homeland offers something new every time you see it...watch carefully.



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