

New Novel by Author Dawn Tripp

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Dawn Tripp stands out as an author who bridges the worlds of poetry, essay, and historical fiction with a strong voice and impressive literary finesse. A nationally bestselling author whose novel *The Season of Open Water* won the Massachusetts Book Award for Fiction, Tripp is a writer with an extraordinary ability to paint with her words a compelling picture of complex historical figures and intimate human experiences.



Tripp's literary craftsmanship and storytelling skills overlay deep and careful research of her subjects—her newest novel, [Jackie](#), took her ten years to research and write. That novel and her book *Georgia* about artist Georgia O'Keeffe (published in 2016) illustrate how historical fiction can be both intellectually rigorous and emotionally engaging. She describes these two novels as "explorations of a woman's relationship to power...they are both novels of desire and freedom and the quest for an independent life...the desire for freedom and autonomy...I feel that while writing both *Georgia* and *Jackie*, I had ideas of exploring the relationship between historical figures—the woman we think we know—and their relationship to power. They both figured out how to navigate and manage and harness the current of power to live lives of their own."

While Tripp describes her novel about O'Keeffe as "an excavation of a story not as well-known," she characterizes her work writing *Jackie* as "more of a distillation: working through a river of sludge to get to the grain of what she was...what gave her integrity and her life meaning...What mattered to her? What did she fight for? What does she grieve?... Who was she?"

During the decade of research Dawn Tripp plunged into to write Jackie, she spent a lot of time in the JFK Library Archives, her biggest source for this book—"they've done an extraordinary job." She read a lot of what Caroline Kennedy wrote about her mother, describing the introduction to Caroline's collected poems as "a revelation to me. She talks about her mother and how she organized the poems around different aspects of her mother's character. At the end of the introduction, Caroline talks about how her mother and her father came together around their passion for books. In every interview of Caroline that I read, the portrait that emerged from Caroline's words and from Jackie's own words were very aligned. But those were not the same construct that we all know."

And to be able to write eloquently and accurately as First Lady Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis, Tripp "spent a lot of time with Jackie's own words...Books that are considered nonfiction take more liberties than I do in Jackie...It's not revising history, it's offering a new window in," Tripp explained.

"When I realized how brilliant she was, that's what I fell in love with. I loved her passion for nature, for the sea, her passion for solitude, her fierce independence. She loved to travel, because she loved to learn. Everywhere she traveled, she would read about the culture, traditions, art, and learn elements of the language to communicate with people in their own tongues. She had a relentless curiosity...She was exceptionally intentional: what she said, choices she made. In the last 2 decades of her life, she had an extraordinary career as an editor to an international list of writers.

"We know she was an equestrian...what we are not expecting is her athletic prowess...she was a strong athlete: a really strong waterskier, she was a slalom skier...when you watch a video of her waterskiing, she's holding her daughter while she skies—that told me so much about her character...I'm still fascinated with her."

Tripp's use of small, precise details that accumulate to create larger, emotionally resonant pictures is very effective in balancing historical accuracy with emotional truth. Her prose is vivid and poetic: which is no surprise since Tripp calls poetry "that room of my own that I keep...Poetry is my first impulse and my first love. I write a lot of poetry, but I've only sent out seven poems...Ocean Vuong is one of my favorite contemporary writers. I love any literature that is grounded in the magic of poetry... the way poetry can access our emotional and spiritual lives... the fragmented dimension of poetry is often deeply true to love and loss and time."

Although Tripp's two most recent novels are written from the perspectives of famous women, not all of her books are in this same vein of fictionalized biography. She describes her other books—*Game of Secrets*, *Moon Tide*, and *The Season of Open Water*—as "grounded in history and a real sense of place, geography and history, but not on individuals...History isn't something 'back there' it's very much alive and shaping our relationship with the future," Tripp commented. "My first three books were very much about place...how place shapes fate, character, lives,

relationships.”

Tripp is excited to be a part of the 2025 [Nantucket](#) Book Festival: “I believe in the magic of book festivals, in that sense of the magic of reading and stories ... the stated mission [of the Nantucket Book Festival] ‘With every book we give to a child and every reader we welcome, we build community on Nantucket one story at a time’—I believe in that, and that is so aligned with why I write.

Suzanne Daub

Insider's Guide to Nantucket

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