

New Novel Reimagines the Life of the Man Who Carved a Book Into an Asylum Wall

Maria Rago's debut, Dear Wall, brings to life Fernando Nannetti, known as NOF4, and the nurse who saved his work, as his real wall goes on exhibition in Italy.

LISLE, IL, UNITED STATES, September 25, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Denied paper, he wrote on the wall. Denied a reader, he wrote anyway. Dear Wall, the debut novel by Maria Rago, is now available worldwide in paperback and Kindle editions, a fictionalized account inspired by the true story of Fernando Oreste Nannetti, the Italian psychiatric patient who spent more than a decade engraving a continuous book into the courtyard wall of the Volterra asylum using only the buckle of his uniform.

Committed in 1948 and transferred to Volterra's San Girolamo asylum in 1958, Nannetti was never once visited. Signing himself NOF4, he covered 150 meters of plaster with daily entries: astral colonels, invented ranks, cosmic titles, and, hidden inside the invention, a quiet ledger of grief for the men disappearing around him. His work survived because one nurse chose to notice. Eight meters were saved in an initial 2012 campaign and more was lifted in 2019, before decades of frost and exposure could finish erasing the rest. Dear Wall imagines that act of attention from the inside through Aldo Ferretti, a fictionalized version of the real nurse Aldo Trafeli, who copies the wall into notebooks at his own kitchen table, year after year, at real cost to his family, until the wall is photographed, published, and finally recognized as one of the great works of outsider art.

The novel arrives at a remarkable moment. Salvaged sections of Nannetti's actual wall are on public display now in the exhibition Graffi Profondi at the Centro Espositivo Santa Maria Maddalena in Volterra, Italy, running through September 27, 2026, while a cast of his work is held in the Collection de l'Art Brut in Lausanne. Readers can finish the novel and, this month, stand in front of the wall itself.

"Fernando asked for a monument, made of stone, not paid for," said author Maria Rago. "The preservationists gave him one in plaster. This novel is my attempt to give him one in paper, and to honor the ordinary people, a nurse, his wife, a sculptor, a photographer, who decided that a man the world had filed away deserved to be read."

Spanning 1927 to 2026, Dear Wall moves between the wards of postwar Italian psychiatry and the reforms that emptied them, following the wall through the hands of three generations: the

man who carved it, the nurse who transcribed it, and the granddaughter who meets it behind museum glass. The novel draws closely on the documented record, including the 1980 photographic campaign, the 1985 volume NOF4: Il Libro della Vita, and Antonio Tabucchi's celebrated 1986 essay that introduced Nannetti to the world, while its interior lives are the work of fiction. An author's note details where the record ends and imagination begins.

"Some books you publish; this one you get out of the way of," said Alex Foster of Booknality, the novel's publishing partner. "Maria has written a book about the difference between a record and a person, and she has done it with the kind of care its subject was denied in life. We are proud to help carry it to readers."

Dear Wall is available now in paperback (ISBN 979-8-2408-4782-0) and Kindle edition (ISBN 979-8-2408-4783-7) on Amazon, with distribution expanding to additional retailers worldwide.

Paperback: <https://a.co/d/0eZNXZwU>

Kindle: <https://a.co/d/0dLSPwlW>

About the Author

Maria Rago is a debut novelist. Dear Wall grew from her encounter with the documented life and surviving wall-writings of Fernando Oreste Nannetti (1927–1994), and from the preservation efforts that continue in Volterra today.

About Booknality

Booknality is a full-service independent publishing house providing ghostwriting, editing, publishing, book marketing, and global brand visibility services to authors worldwide. Learn more at www.booknality.com.

Media Contact

Alex Foster, Associate Manager

Alex Foster

www.booknality.com

+1 (844) 703-4516

alex@booknality.com

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/945303437>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2026 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.