

**Greer Macallister**

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Updated: Nov. 5, 2015

Nationality: American

Occupation: Writer

Updated: Nov. 5, 2015

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## PERSONAL INFORMATION:

**Education:** American University, M.F.A. **Addresses:** Home: Brooklyn, NY.

## CAREER:

Writer.

## WORKS:

**WRITINGS:**

*The Magician's Lie: A Novel*, Sourcebooks Landmark (Naperville, IL), 2014.

Also author of a pseudonymous novel. Contributor of poems and short stories to periodicals, including the *North American Review* and *Missouri Review*.

**Sidelights**

Greer Macallister's book *The Magician's Lie: A Novel* introduces Ada Bates, the Amazing Arden, a female magician working during the early 1900s. Ada travels throughout America, working the vaudeville circuit with her company, and she is famous for her Halved Man trick (akin to sawing apart a woman in a box). Ada decides to up the ante and use a fire ax while performing in Iowa, and her husband is found dead in the Halved Man box later that night. Local policeman Virgil Holt saw the show, and he believes that Arden committed the murder in front of the entire audience. Arden knows she will be the prime suspect and tries to leave town, but Holt arrests her before she escapes. Arden is innocent, of course, and now she must prove it from jail.

Writing about her inspiration for the story on the *Whatever* Web site, Macallister stated: "We've seen countless references to, and images of, a male magician cutting a woman in half. But have you seen anything, ever, about a female magician cutting a man in half? I realized that I hadn't. ... So The Amazing Arden was born. ... she would perform an illusion called The Halved Man, and when it

seemingly went wrong and a man's dead body was found under the stage after a performance, she would be suspected of murder." She also commented on the intersection between magic and writing in an online *History and Other Thoughts* interview, asserting: "I ... find magicians fascinating, although much of that is because of the parallel with writers--we're creating something out of nothing, and we're trying to get the audience (or reader) to care about something that they absolutely know isn't true. If we do our jobs, people believe us even though they know we're lying. It takes a special kind of talent to pull that off--a talent which I definitely don't have in the stage magic department, but I hope I've been able to do with my words. That I ended up getting to explore the parallel between magic and fiction by writing a novel about an illusionist was kind of a happy accident."

Yet, as *Dallas Morning News* reviewer Cindy Bagwell advised: "For a book with an illusionist at its heart and lie in the title, Ada's deception, when revealed, feels anticlimactic. The thrill is there, but less than you might hope for." Bagler nevertheless went on to conclude that "the ride MacAllister takes us on is a grand one. ... At the end, you might find yourself rooting for the story so much, you'll make your own disbelief disappear." Elisabeth Clark, writing in *Library Journal*, lauded the novel, asserting that Macallister "has created a captivating world of enchantment and mystery that readers will be loath to leave." In the words of a *Kirkus Reviews* critic, "devotees of illusion may enjoy the story based on the author's detailed focus on early costumes, movement and techniques." Offering even stronger praise in the *Washington Post*, Carol Memmott announced: "Arden's story races toward that Agatha Christie denouement readers have been anticipating from the start. Macallister, like the Amazing Arden, mesmerizes her audience. No sleight of hand is necessary. An ambitious heroine and a captivating tale are all the magic she needs." A *Publishers Weekly* columnist called *The Magician's Lie* a "well-paced, evocative, and adventurous historical novel," adding that the conclusion succeeds in bringing "Arden's rollicking life full circle and satisfyingly capping off this top-notch novel." Presenting further applause on the *Review Diaries* Web site, a critic declared that *The Magician's Lie* "is an utterly spellbinding book that explores magic, illusions and the desperate struggle for Arden as a woman to carve out her own place and identity in a male dominated society. I loved this book and it stayed with me long after I read the last page."

FURTHER READINGS:

## FURTHER READINGS ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

### PERIODICALS

*Dallas Morning News*, January 9, 2015, Cindy Bagwell, review of *The Magician's Lie: A Novel*.

*Kirkus Reviews*, October 1, 2014, review of *The Magician's Lie*.

*Library Journal*, September 15, 2014, Elisabeth Clark, review of *The Magician's Lie*, p. 68.

*Publishers Weekly*, September 15, 2014, review of *The Magician's Lie*.

*Washington Post*, January 27, 2015, Carol Memmott, review of *The Magician's Lie*.

### ONLINE

*Greer Macallister Home Page*, <http://www.greermacallister.com> (April 12, 2015).

*History and Other Thoughts*, <http://historyandotherthoughts.blogspot.com/> (April 12, 2015), author interview.

*Review Diaries*, <http://reviewdiaries.blogspot.com/> (December 5, 2014), review of *The Magician's Lie*.

*Whatever*, <http://whatever.scalzi.com/> (January 14, 2015), author statement.\*

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