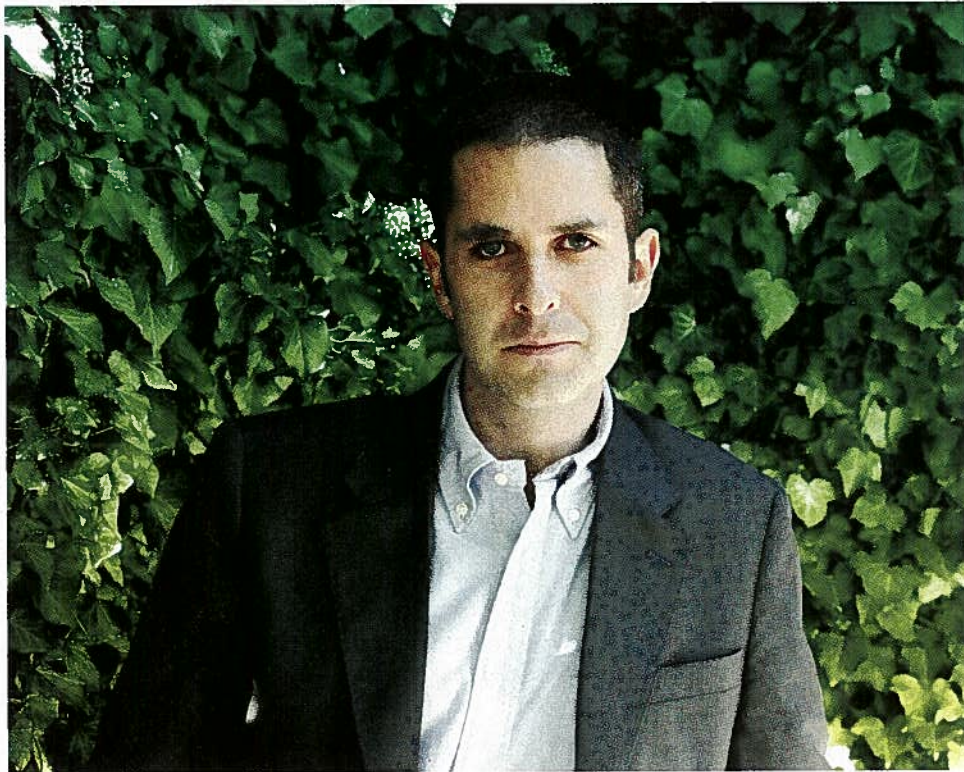


The Fine Print

Spring is stuffed with hammock-ready literary treats. Here, a primer on the essential titles of the season



The Perfectionist

Literary phenom Tom Rachman delivers a juicy, Dickensian new novel

In 2010, Tom Rachman released his debut novel, *The Imperfectionists*, a collection of poignant, prickly interconnecting vignettes set at a slumping English-language newspaper in Rome. The book turned Rachman, a former Associated Press reporter who grew up in Vancouver and studied film at U of T, into the literary world's splashiest upstart and triggered a chain of bidding wars—first for his manuscript, which Random House snatched up for six figures, then for the film rights. Rachman has followed up his seismic success

with *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers*, which is as weird and whimsical as *The Imperfectionists* was tight and measured. A big, juicy beast of a book, it's about a woman—the fabulously named Tooly Zylberberg—struggling to make sense of her childhood, when she was whisked away from her home by a band of peripatetic, charismatic con men. The novel feels Victorian—Tooly and her street gang are straight out of Dickens—yet modernist, as Rachman tells his story in fragments, daring his readers to assemble the pieces.

TIME WARPS

Historical fiction is spring's most ubiquitous literary trend. Here, a look at the best of the new crop



GREECE, 1200 BC

The Lost Sisterhood
by Anne Fortier

Fortier reimagines the Amazon warriors' role in the Trojan War.



FRANCE, 1660

The Shadow Queen
by Sandra Gulland

A poor actress becomes a servant to King Louis XIV's mistress.



SAN FRANCISCO, 1876

Frog Music
by Emma Donoghue

The true-crime tale of a cross-dressing frog catcher's grisly murder.



EUROPE, 1900s

The Confabulist
by Steven Galloway

Harry Houdini escapes his way across Europe in Galloway's fictional retelling.

THE FRESHMEN

Three first-time authors, three great debuts



GHALIB ISLAM

Fire in the Unnameable Country

The Bangladesh-born, Toronto-bred Islam has created a trippy dystopia with a calculating dictator who can read his subjects' thoughts.



CLAIRE BATTERSHILL

Circus

In her first story collection, the 27-year-old U of T alum (and one-time Margaret Atwood protégée) renders ordinary moments with wonder and warmth.



SEAN MICHAELS

Us Conductors

Music blogger Sean Michaels has written a lushly imagined biography of the Soviet inventor of the theremin, one of the first electronic instruments.