

**In a few sentences, how do you describe your book?**

*Anna and the Swallow Man* is a fairytale set in Poland during the 1930's and 1940's that follows a young girl, Anna, as she struggles to grow up and stay safe in a world at war. Left without her parents at a very young age, Anna soon meets the Swallow Man, a skilled deceiver with very long fingers and very deep eyes. The Swallow Man teaches Anna the ways of the dangerous world, and together, they do their best to survive unharmed – by any means necessary. *Anna and the Swallow Man* is a book about the magical uncertainties of war and childhood, and it aims to ask more questions than it answers.

**Why do you describe ANNA AND THE SWALLOW MAN as a fairytale?**

I think my book shares a lot of atmospheric DNA with fairytales, but personally, I have a bit of a complicated relationship with them – I always think I like them more than I do.

Despite my initial excitement in picking up a book of fairytales, I often grow bored with the archetypal and impersonal nature of their characters. What never fails to interest me, though, is what's going on just outside of the camera-shot, so to speak. The background setting of a fairytale is rarely very specific, either, but it's always very clear: the world is dangerous. Frequently, there's little food, there are wars and soldiers everywhere, rulers and political leaders are stupid or indifferent or cruel. In beginning to think about the composition of *Anna and the Swallow Man*, I often thought about the practical similarities between this magical fairytale setting and much of Eastern and Central Europe during World War II.

**You are a working actor, but have also held other jobs along the way. What were you doing at the time that the book was acquired?**

Very frequently, as someone who makes their living doing creative things, you have to take work on the side to keep the bills paid, and sometimes those survival jobs end up taking more time than what you actually want to be doing. When I sold *Anna and the Swallow Man*, I was working in the windowless basement of a Mexican restaurant at a tiny desk in a bad chair answering the phone and processing delivery orders. They were good to me, over there, and gave me work when I needed it (to say nothing of the extreme excellence of their fish taco), but needless to say, I was pretty pleased to make the book deal.

**What do you find to be the similarities and differences between writing and acting?**

In acting, you take responsibility for the outer (and depending on your approach, sometimes inner) life of one character, and you look after everything about them within the creative universe – you determine how they walk, how they talk, how they relate to other people, even (in collaboration with the costume designer) how they wear their clothes. It's a deep dive into one human mind, and it's very rewarding. Writing, on the other hand, provides you with a good deal more creative control. If, for example, you think a particular character wouldn't be wearing a jacket in a particular circumstance, you don't have to negotiate with a costume designer or director, because you ARE both. Furthermore, if you decide the sky is lime green, or that all baked goods share a common secret language, well, there you go: you're right.

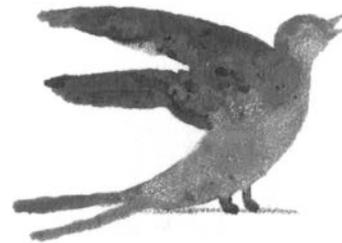
Of course, the downside to this is that there's no one to rein you in when you start digressing over the linguistic tendencies of rye bread. And having creative collaborators is useful and fun in ways that don't just relate to your bad ideas-- it can be helpful and exciting to have another artist standing across from you, giving you new things to think about and play with.

**Your book is being published as YA. What do you think about that designation? Who do you think is the audience for your book?**

I didn't write *Anna and the Swallow Man* for anyone in particular. In fact, if anything, I wrote it for everyone in particular.

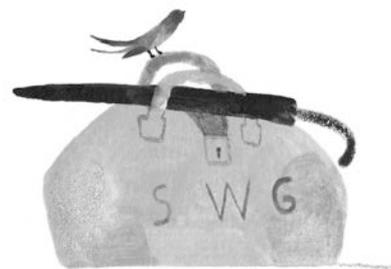
**Who is the Swallow Man?**

That's a really great question. I'd love to know, if you ever find out.



### How did you come up with the character of Anna?

Anna is a lot like me, or rather, a lot like I remember feeling when I was a kid. There's a part of being a child (maybe the most important part) that too many people get rid of as they go along in the world, and that's the part that formulates and asks the questions. In devising the character of the Swallow Man, it became clear to me that he was a man of a very particular sort of magic – the subtle, difficult-to-pin-down sort – and Anna is, perhaps, in distilled human form, the part of each kid that notices that the man without the umbrella in the middle of the sidewalk is somehow bone dry.



### Do you have a personal or family connection to this period in history?

I'm Jewish, but I'm very lucky that my family wasn't in Eastern Europe during the Holocaust, so in that sense, I can't say that I do. In another sense (and it's hard to overestimate how true this is), if you grow up with as strong sense of Jewish identity anytime after 1945, you have a personal connection to the Holocaust because you have to.

### What do you hope people get from reading ANNA AND THE SWALLOW MAN?

Questions. And the urge to find and ask more of them.

### As a debut author, what has been your favorite part of the publishing process so far?

It's SO COOL to be able to share characters and ideas from the inside of my head with excited, interesting people who I otherwise would never have even met. I'm just thrilled to be able to give folks something to read!

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### Gavriel Savit Tour Dates:

New York, NY – Books of Wonder – Tuesday, January 26<sup>th</sup>  
Naperville, IL – Anderson's Bookshop – Monday, February 1<sup>st</sup>  
Milwaukee, IL – Boswell Books – Wednesday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>  
Athens, GA – Avid Bookshop – Friday, February 5<sup>th</sup>  
Nashville, TN – Parnassus Books – Monday, February 8<sup>th</sup>  
Washington, DC – Hooray for Books – Tuesday, February 9<sup>th</sup>  
Raleigh, NC – Quail Ridge Books – Wednesday, February 10<sup>th</sup>  
Chapel Hill, NC – Flyleaf Books – Friday, February 12<sup>th</sup>

