

# Spotlight on: Diane Quin

## November 2016

### Biography



Diane Quin (“D.A. MacQuin”) was raised in Southern Illinois, and currently resides in Mansfield. She is the author of two novels, 1995 and *THE GRID*. She has also written a story collection titled *POLITE CONVERSATION ABOUT THE WEATHER*.

[Find D.A. MacQuin’s work at the Sharon Public Library!](#)

### Interview

**1. As you might guess from our “Local Author” tag in the headline, I’m very interested in how place impacts a writer’s work; and something I noticed about *POLITE CONVERSATION ABOUT THE WEATHER* specifically is that many of the characters are shaped by their Midwestern heritage. Do you deliberately draw on your own experiences as a Midwestern-born author who has moved to New England, or is it something which occurs more naturally in the course of writing? Do you feel that living in New England has given you a new (or at least different) perspective on which to draw?**

*I am absolutely inspired by being a Midwesterner, particularly from Southern Illinois. The plain, direct aesthetic of many Midwestern writers (like Hemingway and Denis Johnson) mirrors the landscape and character of the people. Being from a small town near the border of Kentucky has made me adept at understanding southern dialects and attitudes. Growing up in a small town like this in the 80’s was rife with some social ills, like boredom and bigotry, but it also inspired great ambition, love for nature, and appreciation for the kindness of unpretentious folk.*

*I draw upon being a Midwesterner who moved to New York City more so than someone who now lives in New England. I have lived in NY longer and during more youthful formative years. The contrast of the small Midwestern town and Manhattan is the Gatsby-esque fuel that still makes my mind click. It was the main thrust behind *POLITE CONVERSATION ABOUT THE WEATHER*, my story collection where several characters migrate from the Midwest to New York. I have a deep love for the characters I’ve created who strive to transform themselves. I’ve been here in Massachusetts for six years, but I’m still writing about New York. But I plan to write about New England. The dark, Gothic quality of Lovecraft is a big inspiration.*

**2. When sitting down to a new project, where and how do you begin? Do you tend to plot out your books ahead of time, or do you prefer a write-as-you-go method?**

*Typically I start off with a nugget of emotion that I want to explore within a certain context. For instance, in 1995 I knew I wanted to write something scary, if not disturbing, that*

takes place in a New York City studio apartment. I wanted to create a sense of unease and claustrophobia. Once I envision the macro structure of a story, I try to outline as much as I can. Unfortunately I'm never able to plot out books completely ahead of time. That method would probably make novel writing go more quickly. On the other hand, a lot of the excitement (despite long hours of struggle and self doubt) is that it's a journey that unfolds as I proceed. This meshes with Stephen King and David Lynch's belief that ideas are largely subconscious. For me, plot points don't arrive until they occur to me. Sometimes I get ideas when I'm dreaming at night.

### **3. Your two novels, 1995 and THE GRID, are science-fiction works. What inspired you to write within that genre?**

*Even though most of the writing I've done is general fiction, I've always loved scifi, and one of my favorite writers has always been scifi author, Philip K. Dick. He writes with an understated, sardonic humor, and creates downtrodden, lonely characters that I understand. The classic theme of PKD's work is a protagonist who questions the nature of reality. This is a central theme of 1995; mysterious events occur to Caroline Hauser when she's alone in her apartment. She's a lonely young woman just out of college who's confronted with metaphysical fears of a spiritual nature while grappling with her own developing extra sensory perception. I have always loved science articles, so I wrote some that shed light on what could be happening to Caroline. In many ways, 1995 is my love letter to PKD, and a celebration of my love for science.*

*My publisher, Permuted Press, wanted a sequel, so I wrote THE GRID, which is less experimental in structure than 1995. It picks up right where 1995 left off. I had a lot of fun writing about home in this one. One of the main characters is a spiritual warrior of sorts from Southern Illinois who also happens to be a barbecue champion. Now that I have two scifi novels under my belt, I'm very motivated to continue in the genres of scifi and fantasy.*

### **4. On that note, what are you working on right now?**

*I am currently writing a sequel to THE GRID tentatively titled AMBASSADOR X. I did leave THE GRID with a cliffhanger, so it feels like a natural choice. Also, there's something satisfying about having a scifi trilogy. I want the audience to see my protagonist, Caroline, as a powerful, mature woman who self-actualizes by using her extra sensory perception for the greater good. I hope to expand into more elements of fantasy in this book, creating a more complex cosmology. But I must be honest—it's a slow process because I have three kids at home all under the age of four.*

### **5. That's wonderful, but I imagine it must be challenging at times, too. How do you balance your writing with the other parts of your life?**

*I am very lucky to have a supportive husband who does illustration, so he understands the importance of having time for creative projects. He will watch the kids while I go somewhere and write a couple days a week. It's hard, but I think the most important thing is having the right attitude and not complaining. For me it's best to do the work when I can*

without talking too much about it. I know that one day when the kids are older it will get easier, so it's nice to focus on that.

**6. What do you think makes for an excellent story?**

*An excellent story has characters that make me curious about their outcomes. They don't have to be likeable, and it's helpful if they're transgressive in some fashion. Good fiction exposes the slippery slopes of ethics. It shows that life is messy.*

**7. You've mentioned a few different names here—Philip K. Dick, Stephen King, David Lynch. If you could invite any 3 authors (or other creators) to have lunch with you, who would you invite and why?**

*I would give anything to have lunch with David Lynch. He's been a huge influence on me because he's hard to categorize, he is unfettered by convention, and promotes positivity through transcendental meditation. It would be great to pick his brain about his writing habits.*

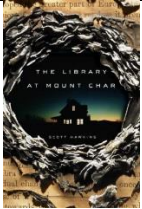

*Darren Aronofsky would be great to have lunch with so we could discuss my turning my 1995 series into a film.*

*This might be an unpopular opinion, but I'd gladly lunch with Woody Allen. He's another one who amazes me with his creative output. I would ask him about how he balances tragedy with comedy.*

**8. I notice that you write under a pseudonym, D.A. MacQuin. Could you talk about the origins of your pen name? What made you choose to use one?**

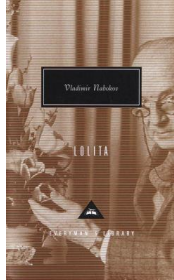
*My first and middle names are Diane Anastasia, so that's where the D.A. comes from. As for MacQuin, I wanted to combine my maiden name with my married name, Quin. I like the idea of creating a new persona with a different name other than the one I use every day.*

**Diane Quin's 5 Favorite Books**

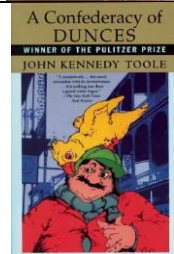
	<p><a href="#">The Library at Mount Char</a> by Scott Hawkins</p>
	<p><a href="#">Dune</a> by Frank Herbert</p>



[Carrie](#)  
*by Stephen King*



[Lolita](#)  
*by Vladimir Nabokov*



[A Confederacy of Dunces](#)  
*by John Kennedy Toole*