

Books

American Dervish

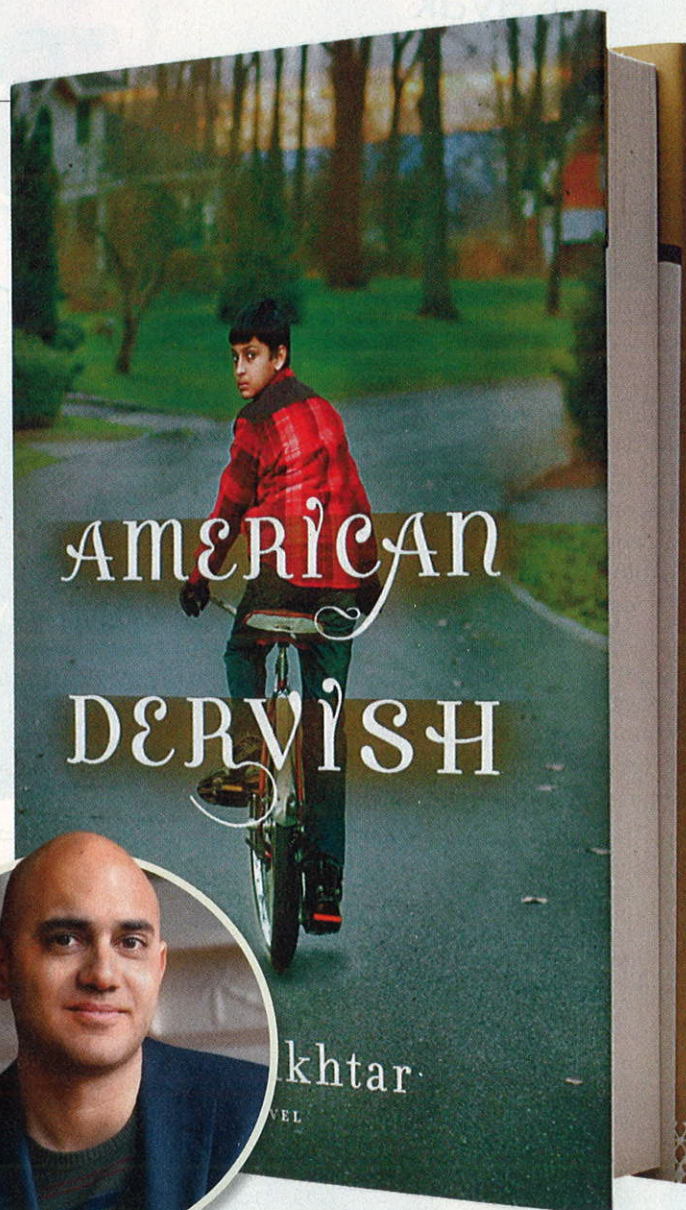
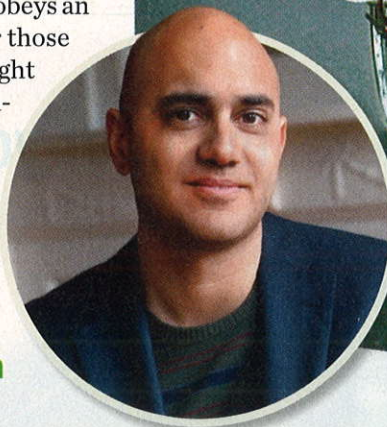
by Ayad Akhtar | ★★★★★

REVIEWED BY HELEN ROGAN

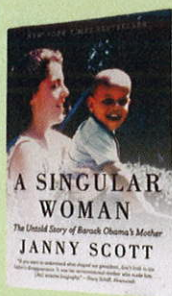
FICTION

It's the early 1980s, and in a quiet Milwaukee suburb, Hayat Shah, a Pakistani-American adolescent, is struggling through an age-appropriate tangle of rebellion, self-doubt and inchoate sexual yearnings. The arrival of his mother's Pakistani friend, the mesmerizing and divorced Mina, adds lust and the teachings of the Quran to the uneasy mix: "I fell asleep and dreamt all night of Mina's hands turning the yellow-white pages," he narrates. As his obsession with Mina grows, so, too, does his passion for religion. But when Mina falls in love with another man, Hayat's feelings of betrayal overwhelm him, and he obeys an impulse that has terrible consequences for those he loves. Ambitious but accessible, playwright Akhtar's engaging first novel tells a particularly fresh and touching coming-of-age story that illuminates the everyday lives of Muslims in America and brings new resonance to universal questions of belief and belonging.

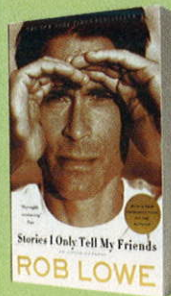
Akhtar dazzles with his debut novel about a Muslim family in pre-9/11 America



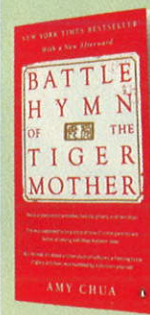
GREAT READS NEW IN PAPERBACK



A SINGULAR WOMAN
by Janny Scott
Journalist Scott's layered portrait of President Obama's highly accomplished mom, Stanley Ann Dunham.



STORIES I ONLY TELL MY FRIENDS
by Rob Lowe
One of our favorites from 2011, Lowe's candid memoir about coming of age in Hollywood is a must-read.



BATTLE HYMN OF THE TIGER MOTHER
by Amy Chua
The Yale professor's now-notorious book on tyrannical parenting will make you laugh, and cringe.