



Reverend Katz Library

New Book Reviews

April 2022

Now that we are over all the hard work preparing for and enjoyment of the seders, we can settle into some interesting reading. These are some of the new books received in April.

Anne Sebba, Ethel Rosenberg: a cold war tragedy BIO ROS

Ethel Rosenberg's story is America's Dreyfus Affair: a catastrophic failure of humanity and justice that continues to haunt the national conscience and is still being played out with different actors in the lead roles today.

On 19th June 1953 Ethel Rosenberg became the first woman in the US to be executed for a crime other than murder. She was thirty-seven years old and the mother of two small children. Yet even today, at a time when the Cold War seems all too resonant, Ethel's conviction for conspiracy to commit espionage on behalf of the Soviet Union makes her story still controversial. This is an important moment to recount not simply what FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover called the 'trial of the century', but also a timeless human story of a supportive wife, loving mother and courageous idealist who grew up during the Depression with aspirations to become an opera singer. Instead, she found herself battling the social mores of the 1950s and had her life barbarically cut short on the basis of tainted evidence for a crime she almost certainly did not commit.

Anne Sebba's masterly biography makes full use of the dramatic prison letters Ethel exchanged with her husband, lawyer and psychotherapist over a three-year period. Sebba has also interviewed Ethel's two sons and others who knew her, including a fellow prisoner. Ethel's tragic story lays bare a nation deeply divided and reveals what happens when a government motivated by fear tramples on the rights of its citizens.

Rosemary Sullivan, The betrayal of Anne Frank: a cold case investigation HOL SUL

Over thirty million people have read *The Diary of a Young Girl*, the journal teen-aged Anne Frank kept while living in an attic with her family and four other people in Amsterdam during World War II, until the Nazis arrested them and sent them to a concentration camp. But despite the many works—journalism, books, plays and novels—devoted to Anne's story, none has ever conclusively explained how these eight people managed to live in hiding undetected for over two years—and who or what finally brought the Nazis to their door.

With painstaking care, retired FBI agent Vincent Pankoke and a team of indefatigable investigators pored over tens of thousands of pages of documents—some never before seen—and interviewed scores of descendants of people familiar with the Franks. Utilizing methods developed by the FBI, the Cold Case Team painstakingly pieced together the months leading to the infamous arrest—and came to a shocking conclusion *The Betrayal of Anne Frank: A Cold Case Investigation* is the riveting story of their mission. Rosemary Sullivan introduces us to the investigators, explains the behaviour of both the captives and their captors and profiles a group of suspects. All the while, she vividly brings to life wartime Amsterdam: a place where no matter how wealthy, educated, or careful you were, you never knew whom you could trust.

Lucy Adlington, *The dress makers of Auschwitz: the true story of the women who survived* HOL ADL

A powerful chronicle of the women who used their sewing skills to survive the Holocaust, stitching beautiful clothes at an extraordinary fashion workshop created within one of the most notorious WWII death camps.

At the height of the Holocaust twenty-five young inmates of the infamous Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, mainly Jewish women and girls were selected to design, cut, and sew beautiful fashions for elite Nazi women in a dedicated salon. It was work that they hoped would spare them from the gas chambers.

This fashion workshop, called the Upper Tailoring Studio was established by Hedwig Höss, the camp commandant's wife, and patronized by the wives of SS guards and officers. Here, the dressmakers produced high-quality garments for SS social functions in Auschwitz, and for ladies from Nazi Berlin's upper crust.

Drawing on diverse sources, including interviews with the last surviving seamstress, *The Dressmakers of Auschwitz* follows the fates of these brave women. Their bonds of family and friendship not only helped them endure persecution, but also to play their part in camp resistance. Weaving the dressmakers' remarkable experiences within the context of Nazi policies for plunder and exploitation, historian Lucy Adlington exposes the greed, cruelty, and hypocrisy of the Third Reich and offers a fresh look at a little-known chapter of World War II and the Holocaust.

Kristen Harmel, *The book of lost names* HOL HAR

Eva Traube Abrams, a semi-retired librarian in Florida, is shelving books one morning when her eyes lock on a photograph in a newspaper nearby. She freezes; it's an image of a book she hasn't seen in sixty-five years—a book she recognizes as *The Book of Lost Names*.

The accompanying article discusses the looting of libraries by the Nazis across Europe during World War II—an experience Eva remembers well—and the search to reunite people with the texts taken from them so long ago. The book in the photograph, an eighteenth-century religious text thought to have been taken from France in the waning days of the war, is one of the most fascinating cases. Now housed in Berlin's Zentral und Landesbibliothek library, it appears to contain some sort of code, but researchers don't know where it came from—or what the code means. Only Eva holds the answer—but will she have the strength to revisit old memories and help reunite those lost during the war?

As a graduate student in 1942, Eva was forced to flee Paris after the arrest of her father, a Polish Jew. Finding refuge in a small mountain town in the Free Zone, she begins forging identity documents for Jewish children fleeing to neutral Switzerland. But erasing people comes with a price, and along with a mysterious, handsome forger named Rémy, Eva decides she must find a way to preserve the real names of the children who are too young to remember who they really are. The records they keep in *The Book of Lost Names* will become even more vital when the resistance cell they work for is betrayed and Rémy disappears.

An engaging and evocative novel reminiscent of *The Lost Girls of Paris* and *The Alice Network*, *The Book of Lost Names* is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the power of bravery and love in the face of evil.

Bill Browder, Red Notice: a true story of corruption, murder and one man's fight for justice HIS BRO

A real-life political thriller about an American financier in the Wild East of Russia, the murder of his principled young tax attorney, and his dangerous mission to expose the Kremlin's corruption. Bill Browder's journey started on the South Side of Chicago and moved through Stanford Business School to the dog-eat-dog world of hedge fund investing in the 1990s. It continued in Moscow, where Browder made his fortune heading the largest investment fund in Russia after the Soviet Union's collapse. But when he exposed the corrupt oligarchs who were robbing the companies in which he was investing, Vladimir Putin turned on him and, in 2005, had him expelled from Russia.

In 2007, a group of law enforcement officers raided Browder's offices in Moscow and stole \$230 million of taxes that his fund's companies had paid to the Russian government. Browder's attorney Sergei Magnitsky investigated the incident and uncovered a sprawling criminal enterprise. A month after Sergei testified against the officials involved, he was arrested and thrown into pre-trial detention, where he was tortured for a year. On November 16, 2009, he was led to an isolation chamber, handcuffed to a bedrail, and beaten to death by eight guards in full riot gear. Browder glimpsed the heart of darkness, and it transformed his life: he embarked on an unrelenting quest for justice in Sergei's name, exposing the towering cover-up that leads right up to Putin. A financial caper, a crime thriller, and a political crusade, Red Notice is the story of one man taking on overpowering odds to change the world.

Julia Boyd, Travellers in the Third Reich: the rise of fascism through the eyes of everyday people HIS BOY

The events that took place in Germany between 1919 and 1945 were dramatic and terrible but there were also moments of confusion, of doubt – of hope. How easy was it to know what was actually going on, to grasp the essence of National Socialism, to remain untouched by the propaganda or predict the Holocaust?

Travellers in the Third Reich is an extraordinary history of the rise of the Nazis based on fascinating first-hand accounts, drawing together a multitude of voices and stories, including students, politicians, musicians, diplomats, schoolchildren, communists, scholars, athletes, poets, journalists, fascists, artists, tourists, even celebrities like Charles Lindbergh and Samuel Beckett. Their experiences create a remarkable three-dimensional picture of Germany under Hitler – one so palpable that the reader will feel, hear, even breathe the atmosphere.

These are the accidental eyewitnesses to history. Disturbing, absurd, moving, and ranging from the deeply trivial to the deeply tragic, their tales give a fresh insight into the complexities of the Third Reich, its paradoxes, and its ultimate destruction.