



Reverend Katz Library

New Book Reviews

November 2022

During November we invite you to come and make your selection from our wonderful collection of varied and interesting books. Now is the time to select books for your summer reading.

Irene Vallejo, *Papyrus: the invention of books in the ancient world* HIS VAL

Long before books were mass-produced, scrolls hand copied on reeds pulled from the Nile were the treasures of the ancient world. Emperors and Pharaohs were so determined to possess them that they dispatched emissaries to the edges of earth to bring them back. When Mark Antony wanted to impress Cleopatra, he knew that gold and priceless jewels would mean nothing to her. So, what did he give her? Books for her library—two hundred thousand, in fact. The long and eventful history of the written word shows that books have always been and will always be a precious—and precarious—vehicle for civilization.

Papyrus is the story of the book's journey from oral tradition to scrolls to codices, and how that transition laid the very foundation of Western culture. Award-winning author Irene Vallejo evokes the great mosaic of literature in the ancient world from Greece's itinerant bards to Rome's multimillionaire philosophers, from opportunistic forgers to cruel teachers, erudite librarians to defiant women, all the while illuminating how ancient ideas about education, censorship, authority, and identity still resonate today. Crucially, Vallejo also draws connections to our own time, from the library in war-torn Sarajevo to Oxford's underground labyrinth, underscoring how words have persisted as our most valuable creations.

Through nimble interpretations of the classics, playful and moving anecdotes about her own encounters with the written word, and fascinating stories from history, Vallejo weaves a marvellous tapestry of Western culture's foundations and identifies the humanist values that helped make us who we are today. At its heart a spirited love letter to language itself, *Papyrus* takes readers on a journey across the centuries to discover how a simple reed grown along the banks of the Nile would give birth to a rich and cherished culture.

Andrew Nagorski, *Saving Freud: a life in Vienna and an escape to freedom in London* BIO FRE

March 1938: German soldiers are massing on the Austrian border, on the cusp of fulfilling Hitler's dream of absorbing the country into the Third Reich. Many Jews make frantic plans to flee to safety. But one of the most famous men in the world, unable to contemplate leaving his beloved Vienna, is not among them. His name is Sigmund Freud.

Saving Freud is the story of a great man's life, and of the extraordinary people who managed to prolong it, by convincing him to escape to London: the Welsh physician who brought psychoanalysis to Britain; Napoleon's great-grandniece; an American ambassador; Freud's devoted daughter, Anna; and the doctor who risked his own life by staying at Freud's side.

In examining the histories of both Freud and his closest circle, Andrew Nagorski brilliantly evokes the story of Europe in the first half of the Twentieth Century. This is a tale of a great city, a collapsing empire, a rising terror -and of a man who would change the way we think.

Ian Kershaw, Personality and power: Builders and destroyers of Modern Europe HIS KER

The acclaimed historian explores how far individual leaders can alter the course of history. The modern era saw the emergence of individuals who had command over a terrifying array of instruments of control, persuasion, and death. Whole societies were re-shaped, and wars fought, often with a merciless contempt for the most basic norms. At the summit of these societies were leaders whose personalities had somehow given them the ability to do whatever they wished.

Ian Kershaw's new book is a compelling, lucid and challenging attempt to understand these rulers, whether operating on the widest stage (Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini) or with a more national impact (Tito, Franco). What was it about these leaders and the times they lived in that allowed them such untrammelled and murderous power? And what brought that era to an end? In a contrasting group of profiles (Churchill, de Gaulle, Adenauer, Gorbachev, Thatcher, Kohl) Kershaw uses his exceptional skills to think through how other, strikingly different figures wielded power.

Pieter Van Os, Hiding in plain sight: how a Jewish girl survived Europe's heart of darkness BIO KUZ


An extraordinary story about a Jewish woman who pretended to be Catholic to survive the Holocaust. Catholics believed she was one of them. A devoted Nazi family took her in. She fell in love with a German engineer who built aeroplanes for the Luftwaffe. But no one knew that Mala Rivka Kizel had been born into a large Orthodox Jewish family. She survived World War II using her charm, intelligence, blonde hair, and blue eyes to assume different identities.

Journalist Pieter van Os retraces Mala's footsteps through Europe to uncover her extraordinary journey and the stories of those who helped her. This poignant, rich book is an engrossing meditation on what drives us to fear the Other, and what in turn might allow us to feel compassion for them.

Olivier Guez, The disappearance of Josef Mengele: A novel F GUE

An extraordinary novel about one of history's most reviled figures

For three decades, until the day he collapsed in the Brazilian surf in 1979, Josef Mengele, the Angel of Death who performed horrific experiments on the prisoners of Auschwitz, floated through South America in linen suits, keeping two steps ahead of Mossad agents, international police and the world's journalists. In this rigorously researched factual novel—drawn almost entirely from historical documents—Olivier Guez traces Mengele's footsteps through these years of flight. This chilling novel situates the reader in a literary manhunt on the trail of one of the most elusive and evil figures of the twentieth century.



Natalie Livingstone *The women of Rothschild: the untold story of the world's most famous dynamic women* BIO LIV

In *The Women of Rothschild*, Natalie Livingstone reveals the role of women in shaping the legacy of the famous Rothschild dynasty, synonymous with wealth and power.

As Jews in a Christian society and women in a deeply patriarchal family, they were outsiders. Excluded from the family bank, they forged their own distinct dynasty of daughters and nieces, mothers, and aunts. They became influential hostesses and talented diplomats, choreographing electoral campaigns, advising prime ministers, advocating for social reform, and trading on the stock exchange. Misfits and conformists, conservatives and idealists, performers, and introverts, they mixed with everyone from Queen Victoria to Chaim Weizmann, Rossini to Isaiah Berlin, and the Duke of Wellington to Alec Guinness, as well as with amphetamine-dealers, suffragists and avant-garde artists. Rothschild women helped bring down ghetto walls in early nineteenth-century Frankfurt, inspired some of the most remarkable cultural movements of the Victorian period, and in the mid-twentieth century burst into America, where they patronized Thelonious Monk and drag-raced through Manhattan with Miles Davis.