



Reverend Katz Library

New Book Reviews

June 2023

Simon Parkin, *The island of extraordinary captives*. HIS PAR

Following the events of Kristallnacht in 1938, Peter Fleischmann evaded the Gestapo's roundups in Berlin by way of a perilous journey to England on a Kindertransport rescue, an effort sanctioned by the UK government to evacuate minors from Nazi-controlled areas. But he could not escape the British police, who came for him in the early hours and shipped him off to Hutchinson Camp on the Isle of Man, under suspicion of being a spy for the very regime he had fled.

During Hitler's rise to power in the 1930s, tens of thousands of German and Austrian Jews like Peter escaped and found refuge in Britain. After war broke out and paranoia gripped the nation, Prime Minister Winston Churchill ordered that these innocent asylum seekers—so-called "enemy aliens"—be interned.

When Peter arrived at Hutchinson Camp, he found one of history's most astounding prison populations: renowned professors, composers, journalists, and artists. Together, they created a thriving cultural community, complete with art exhibitions, lectures, musical performances, and poetry readings. The artists welcomed Peter as their pupil and forever changed the course of his life. Meanwhile, suspicions grew that a real spy was hiding among them—one connected to a vivacious heiress from Peter's past.

Drawing from unpublished first-person accounts and newly declassified government documents, award-winning journalist Simon Parkin reveals an "extraordinary yet previously untold true story" (Daily Express) that serves as a "testimony to human fortitude despite callous, hypocritical injustice" (The New Yorker) and "an example of how individuals can find joy and meaning in the absurd and mundane" (The Spectator).

Philippe Sands, *East West Street: on the origins of Genocide and Crimes against humanity* BIO SAN

A profound, important book, a moving personal detective story and an uncovering of secret pasts, set in Europe's centre, the city of bright colours—Lviv, Ukraine, dividing east from west, north from south, in what had been the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

A book that explores the development of the world-changing legal concepts of "genocide" and "crimes against humanity" that came about as a result of the unprecedented atrocities of Hitler's Third Reich.

It is also a spellbinding family memoir, as the author traces the mysterious story of his grandfather as he maneuvered through Europe in the face of Nazi atrocities. This is "a monumental achievement ... told with love, anger and precision" (John le Carré, acclaimed internationally bestselling author).

East West Street looks at the personal and intellectual evolution of the two men who simultaneously originated the ideas of "genocide" and "crimes against humanity," both of whom, not knowing the other, studied at the same university with the same professors, in "the Paris of Ukraine," a major cultural center of Europe, a city variously called Lemberg, Lwów, Lvov, or Lviv.

Bess Kalb, Nobody will tell you this but me BIO HAL

Bess Kalb, Emmy-nominated TV writer and New Yorker contributor, saved every voicemail her grandmother Bobby Bell ever left her. Bobby was a force--irrepressible, glamorous, unapologetically opinionated. Bobby doted on Bess; Bess adored Bobby. Then, at ninety, Bobby died. But in this debut memoir, Bobby is speaking to Bess once more, in a voice as passionate as it ever was in life.

Recounting both family lore and family secrets, Bobby brings us four generations of indomitable women and the men who loved them. There's Bobby's mother, who travelled solo from Belarus to America in the 1880s to escape the pogroms, and Bess's mother, a 1970s rebel who always fought against convention. Then there's Bess, who grew up in New York and entered the rough-and-tumble world of L.A. television. Her grandma Bobby was with her all the way--she was the light of Bess's childhood and her fiercest supporter, giving Bess unequivocal love, even if sometimes of the toughest kind.

In *Nobody Will Tell You This But Me*, Bobby reminds Bess of the experiences they shared, and she delivers--in phone calls, texts, and unforgettable heart-to-hearts brought vividly to the page--her signature wisdom:

With humour and poignancy, Bess Kalb gives us proof of the special bond that can skip a generation and endure beyond death. This book is a feat of extraordinary ventriloquism and imagination by a remarkably talented writer.

Nora Ephron, Heartburn F EPH

Is it possible to write a sidesplitting novel about the breakup of the perfect marriage? If the writer is Nora Ephron, the answer is a resounding yes. For in this inspired confection of adultery, revenge, group therapy, and pot roast, the creator of "Sleepless in Seattle" reminds us that comedy depends on anguish as surely as a proper gravy depends on flour and butter.

Seven months into her pregnancy, Rachel Samstat discovers that her husband, Mark, is in love with another woman. The fact that the other woman has "a neck as long as an arm and a nose as long as a thumb and you should see her legs" is no consolation. Food sometimes is, though, since Rachel writes cookbooks for a living. And in between trying to win Mark back and loudly wishing him dead, Ephron's irrepressible heroine offers some of her favourite recipes. "Heartburn" is a sinfully delicious novel, as soul-satisfying as mashed potatoes and as airy as a perfect soufflé.

Suzi Smeed and Terence J Quinn, The courage to care HOL SME

19 March 1944: Zsuzsanna Kalmar was just two years old when Nazi tanks rumbled into Budapest and began what Winston Churchill described as "the greatest, most horrible crime ever committed in the history of the world."

For the following five years, Suzi and her family escaped death several times at the hands of both the Germans and the Russians who 'liberated' Hungary in early 1945 before imposing their own form of brutal oppression.

Finally safe in Australia in 1949, Suzi struggled to adjust to her new life as a 'reffero', before enduring two failed marriages and the death of an infant son. Then, aged forty, she met the man who would change her life.

Now in her eighties, she is still teaching future generations about the lessons of the Holocaust. Suzi Smeed has written her inspiring life story to keep a light shining on anti-Semitism because... history shows that it can easily escalate from bigotry to genocide if good people ignore bad things

Chaim Raphael, *Memoirs of a special case* F RAP

The forces that have preserved the Jewish people through the ages are indeed mysterious. Join author Chaim Raphael as he explores the meaning and message of Jewish survival. His stories and essays point to the endless story of Jewish tradition and to the ties that bind Jews to one another. Includes the now classic novella, *Jerusalem*, the tale of a frantic search near the Dead Sea for ancient scrolls and a love affair in Jerusalem. Chaim Raphael is an economist and writer, a former Oxford Don and British Foreign Office official. He is the author of *The Feast of History*, *Encounters with the Jewish People*, and *The Springs of Jewish Life*. His articles frequently appear in American and British magazines. His mystery novels, published under the pseudonym Jocelyn Davy, have earned him the well-deserved title, the Aldous Huxley of detection.

Noa Tishby, *Israel: A simple guide to the most misunderstood country on the earth*

Israel. The small strip of arid land is 5,700 miles away but remains a hot-button issue and a thorny topic of debate. But while everyone seems to have a strong opinion about Israel, how many people actually know the facts?

Here to fill in the information gap is Israeli American Noa Tishby. But “this is not your Bubbie’s history book” (Bill Maher, host of *Real Time with Bill Maher*). Instead, offering a fresh, 360-degree view, Tishby brings her “passion, humour, and deep intimacy” (Yossi Klein Halevi, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Letters to My Palestinian Neighbor*) to the subject, creating an accessible and dynamic portrait of a tiny country of outsized relevance. Through bite-sized chunks of history and deeply personal stories, Tishby chronicles her homeland’s evolution, beginning in Biblical times and moving forward to cover everything from WWI to Israel’s creation to the disputes dividing the country today. Tackling popular misconceptions with an abundance of facts, Tishby provides critical context around headline-generating controversies and offers a clear, intimate account of the richly cultured country of Israel.

Suzanne Leal, *The Deception* F LEA

Moving from wartime Europe to modern day Australia, *The Deceptions* is a powerful story of old transgressions, unexpected revelations and the legacy of lives built on lies and deceit. Prague, 1943. Taken from her home in Prague, Hana Lederova finds herself imprisoned in the Jewish ghetto of Theresienstadt, where she is forced to endure appalling deprivation and the imminent threat of transportation to the east. When she attracts the attention of the Czech gendarme who becomes her guard, Hana reluctantly accepts his advances, hoping for the protection she so desperately needs.

Sydney, 2010. Manipulated into a liaison with her married boss, Tessa knows she needs to end it, but how? Tessa’s grandmother, Irena, also has something to hide. Harkening back to the Second World War, hers is a carefully kept secret that, if revealed, would send shockwaves well beyond her own fractured family.

Inspired by a true story of wartime betrayal, *The Deceptions* is a searing, compassionate tale of love and duplicity-and family secrets better left buried.