



Reverend Katz Library

New Book Reviews

September 2022

This month an exciting array of varied books awaits you. We have a new biography of Zelensky as well as an interesting selection of fiction based on different situations during the Second World War in different countries in Europe. Please come to the Rev Katz Library to make your selection.

Serhii Rudenko, Zelensky: A biography BIO ZEL

Three years after the political novice Volodymyr Zelensky was elected to Ukraine's highest office, he found himself catapulted into the role of war-time leader. The former comedian has become the public face of his country's courageous and bloody struggle against a brutal invasion.

Born to Jewish parents in central Ukraine, Zelensky campaigned for the presidency in the 2019 election on the promise to restore trust in politics. After his landslide victory, he told jubilant supporters 'I will never let you down.' Little did he know that he would be called upon to serve his people in the most demanding circumstances imaginable, fighting for the very survival of his country in the worst war on European soil since 1945.

Zelensky's leadership in the face of Russia's aggression is an inspiration to everyone who stands opposed to the appalling violence being unleashed on Ukraine.

This book tells his astonishing story.

Melanie Levensohn, A Jewish girl in Paris F Lev

Inspired by true events and set against the backdrop of the Second World War, Melanie Levensohn's *A Jewish Girl in Paris* is a powerful novel about forbidden love, adapted from a translation by Jamie Lee Searle.

Paris, 1940, a city under German occupation. A young Jewish girl, Judith, meets a young man, the son of a wealthy banker and Nazi sympathizer - his family will never approve of the girl he has fallen in love with. As the Germans impose more and more restrictions on Jewish Parisians, the couple secretly plan to flee the country. But before they can make their escape, Judith disappears . . .

Montréal, 1982. Shortly before his death, Lica Grunberg confesses to his daughter, that she has an older half-sister, Judith. Lica escaped the Nazis but lost all contact with his first-born daughter. His daughter promises to find the sister she never knew. The search languishes for years, until Jacobina is spurred on by her young friend Béatrice.

Soon the two women discover a dark family secret, stretching over two continents and six decades, that will change their lives forever . . .

Belinda Alexander, The French agent F ALEX

Paris 1946: Sabine Brouillette is a war crimes investigator with the French secret service. She lost her family, including her young son, when her Resistance circuit was betrayed near the end of the war. New evidence comes to light that the traitor was a British double agent who went by the codename 'the Black Fox'. Now her quest for revenge has a single focus: find the Black Fox and kill him.

Sydney 1946: Landscape designer Diana White has been waiting six years for her husband, Casper, to return from the war in Europe. Her son, Freddy, was only a baby when his British-born father joined the RAF. But Casper is a changed man when he returns from the convalescent hospital in England where he has spent the past year under mysterious circumstances. No longer the easy going

personality Diana fell in love with, he is now darker and more secretive. Soon Sabine and Diana find themselves on a collision course, one seeking vengeance, the other willing to go to any lengths to protect her family.

Malka Adler, *The Polish Girl* F ADL

Winter 1939: Danusha and her family are forced to flee their home when the Nazis invade Poland. Danusha's mother, Anna, changes her name and secures a position as a housekeeper in a German doctor's mansion in Krakow where Gestapo meetings are hosted in the kitchen...

Her secret is their salvation, but what Danusha remembers most is the solitude, with only her baby brother and the girl in the mirror for company.

All Anna ever wanted was a firstborn son. All Danusha ever wanted was a mother who would love her like a firstborn son. Instead, she got one who could look a Nazi straight in the eye but not into the eyes of her own daughter.

It is only years later, when their neighbours gather in the living room to hear Anna's stories, that Danusha finally realises her mother was never a cold unknowable sea but a storm-wracked sky - sometimes bright, sometimes dark, and always watching over her.

The Polish Girl is a heartbreaking and unforgettable historical novel by the author of international bestseller *The Brothers of Auschwitz* - perfect for fans of Antonio Iturbe and Edith Eger.

Tilar J Mazzeo, *Sisters in Resistance* HIS MAZ

Extraordinary true story of how three women — a fascist's daughter, a German spy, and an American socialite — raced against Hitler's SS to get key evidence into the hands of the Allies.

In 1943, Edda Mussolini, daughter of the fascist dictator Benito Mussolini, gave her father and Hitler an extraordinary ultimatum: release her husband, Italy's former foreign minister, Galeazzo Ciano, from prison, or risk her leaking her husband's diaries to the press. Knowing the diaries would expose Nazi lies and create a foundation for war crimes prosecutions, Hitler and Mussolini vowed to do everything in their power to see the diaries destroyed — even if it meant killing Mussolini's daughter. To do this, they ordered Hilde Beetz, a German spy, to seduce Ciano in prison in order to learn the diaries' location. However, the seducer became the seduced, joining forces with Edda to try to save Ciano from execution. When this failed, Edda fled, with Hilde's daring assistance, to keep Ciano's final wish: to see the diaries published for use by the Allies.

Upon learning of Edda's escape, the head of United States intelligence, Alan Dulles, sent in socialite Frances de Chollet, assigned by chance to a mission that would change her life. Her task was to find Edda, gain her trust, and, crucially, hand the diaries over to the Americans. Against all expectations, what developed was a rich and humanising friendship between the two women. Staying one step ahead of the Gestapo agents who were hunting Edda, together they succeeded in preserving one of the most important historic documents of World War II.

Michelle Gable, *The booksellers secret* F GAB

In 1942 London, Nancy Mitford is worried about more than air raids and German spies. Still recovering from a devastating loss, the once sparkling Bright Young Thing is estranged from her husband, her allowance has been cut, and she's given up her writing career. On top of this, her five beautiful but infamous sisters continue making headlines with their controversial politics.

Eager for distraction and desperate for income, Nancy jumps at the chance to manage the Heywood Hill bookshop while the owner is away at war. Between the shop's brisk business and the literary salons she hosts for her eccentric friends, Nancy's life seems on the upswing. But when a mysterious French officer insists that she has a story to tell, Nancy must decide if picking up the pen again and revealing all is worth the price she might be forced to pay.

Eighty years later, Heywood Hill is abuzz with the hunt for a lost wartime manuscript written by Nancy Mitford. For one woman desperately in need of a change, the search will reveal not only a new side to Nancy, but an even more surprising link between the past and present.

Kristy Cambron, *The Italian Ballerina* CAM F

A prima ballerina. Two American medics. And a young Jewish girl with no name . . . At the height of the Nazi occupation of Rome, an unlikely band of heroes comes together to save Italian Jews in this breathtaking World War II novel based on real historical British ballerina Julia Bradbury is stranded and forced to take refuge at a hospital on Tiber Island. But when she learns of a deadly sickness that is sweeping through the quarantine wards—a fake disease known only as Syndrome K—she is drawn into one of the greatest cons in history.

Alongside hospital staff, friars of the adjoining church, and two Allied medics, Julia risks everything to rescue Italian Jews from the deadly clutches of the Holocaust. But when one little girl who dreams of becoming a ballerina arrives at their door, Julia and the others are determined to reunite the young dancer with her family—if only she would reveal one crucial secret: her name. Based on true accounts of the invented Syndrome K sickness, *The Italian Ballerina* journeys from the Allied storming of the beaches at Salerno to the London ballet stage and the war-torn streets of WWII Rome, exploring the sometimes heart-wrenching choices we must make to find faith and forgiveness, and how saving just one life can impact countless others.