



Reverend Katz Library

New Book Reviews

September 2019

Do you know that on the North Shore Synagogue Website: nss.asn.au there is a complete Author, Title and Subject catalogue to assist you in searching for a particular book or seeing what is available in our wonderful Rev Katz Library. Search for Reverend Katz Library and you will find all the information about the library.

We welcome you to make a selection this month for your reading, during and after the Chagim.

Diane Armstrong, The Collaborator F ARM

Is he a hero or a traitor? Based on astonishing true events set in the darkest days of World War II in Budapest, this is an enthralling story of heroism, vengeance, passion, and betrayal. It is also the story of three women linked by a secret that threatens to destroy their lives.

An act of heroism, the taint of collaboration, a doomed love affair, and an Australian woman who travels across the world to discover the truth...

It is 1944 in Budapest and the Germans have invaded. Jewish journalist Miklos Nagy risks his life and confronts the dreaded Adolf Eichmann in an attempt save thousands of Hungarian Jews from the death camps. But no one could have foreseen the consequences...

It is 2005 in Sydney, and Annika Barnett sets out on a journey that takes her to Budapest and Tel Aviv to discover the truth about the mysterious man who rescued her grandmother in 1944.

By the time her odyssey is over, history has been turned on its head, past and present collide, and the secret that has poisoned the lives of three generations is finally revealed in a shocking climax that holds the key to their redemption.

'A cleverly crafted mystery... a good story, well told. Armstrong's skill in weaving an elaborate fabric out of her characters and subject matter stand her in good stead...the bleak wintry landscapes of the Polish countryside are vividly captured.' - Andrew Riemer, Sydney Morning Herald

Alex Skovron, The man who took to his bed LIT SKO

A man wakes up one morning to find an unknown woman in bed beside him. A failed writer devises an ingenious method of plagiarizing the work of others. Whole properties in a suburban neighbourhood begin vanishing overnight. An ancient grand piano is purchased by a mysterious young customer with an old secret. A spontaneous experiment in the paranormal produces an unexpected result ...

This collection of fourteen short stories is Alex Skovron's second book of fiction, after his novella *The Poet* (2005). It introduces an eclectic range of protagonists, predicaments, voices, and narrative styles – playful, earnest, speculative, ironic, intimate, bittersweet, surreal. Between them, the characters we meet span childhood and adolescence, adulthood and old age, and their stories highlight the untoward in the everyday, the transformative in the mundane, the twists and turning-points that can challenge us – and the games we play with others, and with ourselves.

'By turns beautifully detailed, puzzling and always intriguing, the hauntingly solitary tone of these exquisitely observed stories induces a rare meditative attentiveness in the reader. It is a powerfully affecting collection that left me eager to explore more of Skovron's world.'

— Alex Miller

Lee Kofman ed. Split: true stories of leaving, loss and new beginnings LIT KOF

In this compelling anthology of personal essays, curated by award-winning author Lee Kofman, some of Australia's most beloved writers reveal, for the first time, powerful, occasionally funny and often heartbreaking stories of significant endings and their aftermath.

Graeme Simsion, author of *The Rosie Project*, shares how he discarded his past, perhaps autistic self, while comedian Sami Shah writes about his public split from Islam, the religion of his birth. Ramona Koval delves into the bittersweet end to her career at the ABC and Fiona Wright explores how her anorexia has affected her romantic relationships. Whereas Kate Holden suggests that for some, splitting, whether from memorabilia, books or lovers, is unimaginable.

Join eighteen acclaimed storytellers in their candid and courageous reflections on the intrinsic human experience of loss and leaving, which acknowledge the price we can often pay for a much-needed end, or new beginning.

Nathan Englander, *Kaddish.com* HUM ENG

How far would you go to fulfil your father's last wishes? The new novel from the Pulitzer-prize shortlisted author of *What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank*

From the Pulitzer prize shortlisted author of *What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank*, a brilliant, streamlined comic novel, reminiscent of early Philip Roth.

Larry is an atheist in a family of orthodox Memphis Jews. When his father dies, it is his responsibility as the surviving son to recite the Kaddish, the Jewish prayer for the dead, every day for 11 months. To the horror and dismay of his mother and sisters, Larry refuses—thus imperiling the fate of his father's soul. To appease them, and in penance for failing to mourn his father correctly, he hatches an ingenious if cynical plan, hiring a stranger through a website called *Kaddish.com* to recite the daily prayer and shepherd his father's soul safely to rest.

This is Nathan Englander's freshest and funniest work to date—a satire that touches, lightly and with unforgettable humour, on the conflict between religious and secular worlds, and the hypocrisies that run through both. A novel about atonement; family and duty; about spiritual redemption; and about the soul-sickening temptations of the internet, which, like God, is everywhere.

Steven Weitzman *The origin of the Jews; the quest for roots in a rootless age* HIS WEI

The first major history of the scholarly quest to answer the question of Jewish origins. The Jews have one of the longest continuously recorded histories of any people in the world, but what do we actually know about their origins? While many think the answer to this question can be found in the Bible, others look to archaeology or genetics. Some skeptics have even sought to debunk the very idea that the Jews have a common origin. In this book, Steven Weitzman takes a learned and lively look at what we know—or think we know—about where the Jews came from, when they arose, and how they came to be.

Scholars have written hundreds of books on the topic and have come up with scores of explanations, theories, and historical reconstructions, but this is the first book to trace the history of the different approaches that have been applied to the question, including genealogy, linguistics, archaeology, psychology, sociology, and genetics. Weitzman shows how this quest has been fraught since its inception with religious and political agendas, how anti-Semitism cast its long shadow over generations of learning, and how recent claims about Jewish origins have been difficult to disentangle from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He does not offer neatly packaged conclusions but invites readers on an intellectual adventure, shedding new light on the assumptions and biases of those seeking answers—and the challenges that have made finding answers so elusive.

Spanning more than two centuries and drawing on the latest findings, *The Origin of the Jews* brings needed clarity and historical context to this enduring and often divisive topic.

Andrea Goldsmith, *Invented lives* F GOL

Knowing what you want is hard. Accepting what is possible is harder still.

It is the mid-1980s. In Australia, stay-at-home wives jostle with want-it-all feminists, while AIDS threatens the sexual freedom of everyone. On the other side of the world, the Soviet bloc is in turmoil.

Mikhail Gorbachev has been in power for a year when twenty-four-year-old book illustrator Galina Kogan leaves Leningrad — forbidden ever to return. As a Jew, she's inherited several generations worth of Russia's chronic anti-Semitism. As a Soviet citizen, she is unprepared for Australia and its easy-going ways.

Once settled in Melbourne, Galina is befriended by Sylvie and Leonard Morrow, and their adult son, Andrew. The Morrow marriage of thirty years balances on secrets. Leonard is a man with conflicted desires and passions, while Sylvie chafes against the confines of domestic life. Their son, Andrew, a successful mosaicist, is a deeply shy man. He is content with his life and work — until he finds himself increasingly drawn to Galina.

While Galina grapples with the tumultuous demands that come with being an immigrant in Australia, her presence disrupts the lives of each of the Morrows. No one is left unchanged.

Invented Lives tells a story of exile: exile from country, exile at home, and exile from one's true self.

Tehilla Abramov, *The secret of Jewish femininity ; Insights into the practice of Taharat Hamishpacha* JUD ABR

The Secret of Jewish Femininity by Tehilla Abramov offers insights into the practice of Taharas Hamishpacha. The survival of the Jewish People as a Holy Nation has always depended on the determination of its married women to keep Taharas Hamishpacha. This book is unique in that it is written for women by a woman, with their practical needs in mind. The laws of family purity are interwoven with philosophical insights, giving the reader a very positive attitude toward Taharas Hamishpacha.

Nosson Sherman, Rabbi ed and Meir Zlotowitz, Rabbi ed, Rosh Hashanah; its significance, laws, and prayers JUD SCH

(Artscroll Mesorah Series)

Available in the library now to assist your studies and understanding of Rosh Hashanah's significance, laws and prayers.

Nosson Sherman, Rabbi, ed and Meir Zlotowitz, Rabbi ed, Yom Kippur; its significance, laws, and prayers JUD SCH

(Artscroll Mesorah Series)

Available in the library now to assist your studies and understanding of Yom Kippur's significance, laws and prayers.