



Reverend Katz Library

New Book Reviews

June 2025

**Murray Douglas, *On Democracies and Death cults. Israel, Hamas and the future of the West*
MID MUR**

Douglas Murray, international bestselling author and renowned cultural commentator confronts what he views as the most pressing issue of our time: why Western support of the Palestinian cause is ultimately playing into the hands of a much more dangerous force.

Drawing from intensive on-the-ground reporting in Israel, Gaza and Lebanon, Murray presents a compelling case that places the latest violence in its historical context. He takes readers on a harrowing journey through the aftermath of the 7 October 2023 massacre, piecing together exclusive accounts from victims, survivors and even the terrorists responsible for the atrocities.

On Democracies and Death Cults argues that Israel's commitment to fundamental Western values – capitalism, individual rights, democracy and reason – has made it a beacon of progress in a region dominated by authoritarianism and extremism. Murray contrasts Israel's principles with the ideology of Hamas, which openly proclaims its love of death over life. If left unchecked, Murray argues, this misplaced Western sympathy could embolden forces that seek to undermine democratic values and perpetuate a culture of violence.

Clear-eyed and deeply reasoned, *On Democracies and Death Cults* is a gripping and essential read for all who seek to understand the complexities of the Israeli Palestinian conflict and its implications for the future of democracy – and for the world itself.

David Hazony, *Young Zionist voices: a new generation speaks out* ISR HAZ

Bringing together the next generation of Jewish leaders.

In the wake of 10/7 and the tidal wave of antisemitism that followed, a new generation of young Jewish leaders took matters into their own hands. *Young Zionist Voices* brings them together for the first time: 31 campus activists, young professionals, thought leaders and rabbis from the United States, Israel, and around the world—all in one volume.

Together they have a message to share: That the next generation of the Jewish people will be led by passionate, smart people committed to a strong, proud, and prosperous Jewish future.

This timely collection of essays by young activists and thinkers offers a core of ideas to lead the next generation—one filled with Jewish pride, passion for Israel and Zionist resilience in the face of a global assault on their identity, homeland and heritage.

Katia Ariel Ferryman; *The life and Deathwork of Ephraim Finch* BIO FIN

Ferryman: *The Life and Deathwork of Ephraim Finch* is a profoundly moving exploration of life, loss, and legacy. Blending biography, memoir, and cultural history, Katia Ariel brings to life the remarkable story of Ephraim Finch OAM—a death worker, community builder, and guardian of cultural memory.

Drawing from Finch's handwritten journals and intimate interviews, Ariel masterfully explores themes of grief, memory, ritual, and the celebration of life, all with tenderness and wisdom. Finch's extraordinary journey—from his working-class Sydney upbringing to his conversion to Orthodox Judaism, and later, his pivotal role as director of Melbourne's Jewish Burial Society—offers a deeply human reflection on belonging, service, and the enduring power of stories.

For thirty years Finch provided unwavering support to bereaved families, including Holocaust survivors, while seamlessly navigating coroners, police, clergy, and medical professionals. A consummate connector, he preserved sacred Jewish traditions while fostering understanding across religious and secular communities, making death and its rituals less daunting and more accessible.

At a time of increasing cultural division and societal fractures, *Ferryman* is a vital and timely story—one that reminds us of the power of compassion, service, and the sacredness of life itself.

With a foreword by Arnold Zable and praise from literary luminaries such as Hannah Kent, Raimond Gaita, Chloe Hooper, and Kylie Moore-Gilbert, *Ferryman* is an essential addition to our literary and cultural landscape.

Yehudis Fletcher, *Chutzpah; A memoir of faith, sexuality and daring to stay* BIO FLE

A fearless navigation of faith and sexuality, *Chutzpah* explores what is possible when one person simply refuses to choose between abandoning their roots and abandoning themselves.

As the daughter of a rabbi raised in an Orthodox Jewish community, Yehudis struggled to conform to the strict expectations placed upon her and her siblings. Outspoken, curious and desperate to know more about G-d, she felt fenced in by arbitrary rules and questions left unanswered.

As she grew older, these restrictions intensified and her questions for G-d hung heavier than ever. Repeatedly let down by those who were supposed to protect her and pushed on to a path that seemed to take her further away from who she really was, she began to yearn for a life where she could embrace all facets of herself.

When Yehudis's sexuality came to blows with the expectations of her family and her community, the pressure to inhabit a binary position reached fever pitch. Confronted with either losing the faith she loved or losing herself, Yehudis made the most daring decision of all: she decided to stay.

Alka Joshi, *Six days in Bombay* F JOS

When renowned painter Mira Novak arrives at Wadia hospital in Bombay after a miscarriage, she's expected to make a quick recovery, and her nurse, Sona, is excited to learn more about the vivacious artist who shares her half-Indian identity. Sona, yearning for a larger life, finds herself carried away by Mira's stories of her travels and exploits and is shocked by accounts of the many lovers the painter has left scattered throughout Europe. When Mira dies quite suddenly and mysteriously, Sona falls under suspicion, and her quiet life is upended.

The key to proving Sona's innocence may lie in a cryptic note and four paintings Mira left in her care, sending the young woman on a mission to visit the painter's former friends and lovers across a tumultuous Europe teetering toward war. On the precipice of discovering her own identity, Sona learns that the painter's charming facade hid a far more complicated, troubled soul.

In her first stand-alone novel since her bestselling debut, *The Henna Artist*, Alka Joshi uses the life of painter Amrita Sher-Gil, the 'Frida Kahlo of India', as inspiration for the story's beginning to explore how far we'll travel to determine where we truly belong.

Lucy Adlington, *Four red sweaters*; powerful true stories of women and Holocaust HOL ADL

The New York Times bestselling author of *The Dressmakers of Auschwitz* weaves together the stories of four Jewish girls during the Holocaust, strangers whose lives were unknowingly intertwined by everyday garments.

Jock Heidenstein, Anita Lasker, Chana Zumerkorn and Regina Feldman all faced the Holocaust in different ways. While they did not know each other – in fact had never met – each had a red sweater that would play a major part in their lives. In this absorbing and deeply moving account, award-winning clothes historian Lucy Adlington documents their stories, knitting together the experiences that fragmented their families and their lives.

Adlington immortalizes these young women whose resilience, skills, strength and kindness accompanied them through the darkest events in human history. A powerful reminder of the suffering they endured and a celebration of courage, love and tenacity, this moving and original work illuminates moments long lost to history, now pieced back together by a simple garment.

Rosie Whitehouse, *Two sisters*; betrayal, love and resistance in wartime France HOL WHI

When the Nazis invaded France in 1940, Marion and Huguette Müller's family was torn apart. After their mother was deported to Auschwitz, the two young Jewish women fled to the Alpine skiing town of Val d'Isère, where they were rescued by an incredibly courageous doctor.

Through intrepid reporting, sensitive family interviews, and thousands of records, Rosie Whitehouse traces decades-old mysteries of the Müller sisters' story, seeking closure and justice for her family and the doctor's. Why did he shelter them? Who had betrayed their mother? How did this national tragedy happen?

Whitehouse's discoveries raise deep moral questions about France's Holocaust, with urgent resonance for today's politics: questions about French complicity, minority agency, collective culpability, duty to your country and duty to other people. She pieces together not only how the sisters were saved, but how so many others were lost.

From villagers to Vichy officials, antisemitism to resistance, this is a sweeping yet intimate history of French choices before, during and after the Nazi occupation; and a moving, gripping tale of forged documents, narrow escapes, one family's trauma, and the grace of human connection.

