

We Are Here: Memories of the Lithuanian Holocaust



Winner of the 2013 National Book Prize from Grub Street, the 2013 Towson Prize for Literature, the Silver Medal for History from the 2012 ForeWord Book of the Year Awards, the 2013 Prakhin International Literary Foundation Award, and the 2013-14 Best Book Award from the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies. Shortlisted for the 2014 Saroyan Prize. Ellen Cassedy's longing to recover the Yiddish she lost with her mother's death eventually led her to Lithuania, and its capital, Vilnius, once the Jerusalem of the North. As she prepared for her journey, her uncle, sixty years after he left Lithuania in a boxcar, made a shocking disclosure about his wartime experience, and an elderly man from her ancestral town made an unsettling request. Gradually, what had begun as a personal journey broadened into a larger exploration of how the people of this country, Jews and non-Jews alike, are confronting their past in order to move forward into the future. How does a nation - how do successor generations, moral beings - overcome a bloody past? How do we judge the bystanders, collaborators, perpetrators, rescuers, and ourselves? These are the questions Cassedy confronts in *We Are Here*, one woman's exploration of Lithuania's Jewish history combined with a personal exploration of her own family's place in it. Digging through archives with the help of a local whose motives are puzzling to her; interviewing natives, including an old man who wants to speak to a Jew before he dies; discovering the complications encountered by a country that endured both Nazi and Soviet occupation - Cassedy finds that it's not just the facts of history that matter, but what we choose to do with them.

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