



The House by the Lake: One House, Five Families, and a Hundred Years of German History

Thomas Harding

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A Finalist for the Costa Biography Award

Longlisted for the Orwell Prize

Named a Best Book of the Year by

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In the summer of 1993, Thomas Harding traveled to Germany with his grandmother to visit a small house by a lake on the outskirts of Berlin. It had been her “soul place,” she said—a holiday home for her and her family, but also a refuge—until the 1930s, when the Nazis’ rise to power forced them to leave.

The trip was his grandmother’s chance to remember her childhood sanctuary as it was. But the house had changed, and when Harding returned once again nearly twenty years later, it was about to be demolished. It now belonged to the government, and as Harding began to inquire about whether the house could be saved, he unearthed secrets that had lain hidden for decades. Slowly he began to piece together the lives of the five families who had lived there: a wealthy landowner, a prosperous Jewish family, a renowned composer, a widow and her children, a Stasi informant. All had made the house their home, and all but one had been forced out.

The house had weathered storms, fires and abandonment, witnessed violence, betrayals and murders, and had withstood the trauma of a world war and the dividing of a nation. Breathtaking in scope and intimate in its detail, *The House by the Lake* is a groundbreaking and revelatory new history of Germany, told over a tumultuous century through the story of a small wooden house.

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