

The background features a complex network of white circular nodes connected by thin purple lines. The nodes are scattered across the frame, with some forming distinct geometric shapes like triangles and quadrilaterals. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern, with a color gradient from dark purple at the top to a lighter pinkish-purple at the bottom.

The World That We Knew

Written by Alice Hoffman

Published by kctv7

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The World That We Knew

By Alice Hoffman

The World That Never Was

In 1941, during humanity's darkest hour, three unforgettable young women must act with courage and love to survive, from the New York Times bestselling author of *The Dovekeepers* and *The Marriage of Opposites* Alice Hoffman.

The World That We Knew

In Berlin, at the time when the world changed, Hanni Kohn knows she must send her twelve-year-old daughter away to save her from the Nazi regime. She finds her way to a renowned rabbi, but it's his daughter, Ettie, who offers hope of salvation when she creates a mystical Jewish creature, a rare and unusual golem, who is sworn to protect Lea. Once Ava is brought to life, she and Lea and Ettie become eternally entwined, their paths fated to cross, their fortunes linked.

The World That The Children Made

Lea and Ava travel from Paris, where Lea meets her soulmate, to a convent in western France known for its silver roses; from a school in a mountaintop village where three thousand Jews were saved. Meanwhile, Ettie is in hiding, waiting to become the fighter sheâ€™s destined to be.

The World That Trade Created

What does it mean to lose your mother? How much can one person sacrifice for love? In a world where evil can be found at every turn, we meet remarkable characters that take us on a stunning journey of loss and resistance, the fantastical and the mortal, in a place where all roads lead past the Angel of Death and love is never ending.

LONG....(ha.....again?!I couldnâ€™t help myself), but NO SPOILERS...

This book has crawled under my skin. Itâ€™s a book of womanly strength, love, and wisdom....set in WWII.

Usually I write a review immediately upon finishing it.

Iâ€™m glad I waited. It took me longer to read this novel more than others of the same length. I paused longer - lingered longer - over sentences. I also spent time studying history I was unfamiliar with.

With feelings of being small - in my own ability to write a rev LONG....(ha.....again?!I couldnâ€™t help myself), but NO SPOILERS...

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With feelings of being small - in my own ability to write a review of this very ambitious historical novel - I needed time to let my feelings neutralized - contend with my thoughts - and locate my â€˜Courage Hatâ€™. Iâ€™m not going to get this right - but I promise to do the best I can.

My â€˜very firstâ€™ inner voice response (after reading â€œThe World That We Knewâ€•), was...."close, but still not â€˜The Dovekeepersâ€™".

I quickly marked â€˜readâ€™ with 4 stars highlighted on Goodreads...., but I think I knew in my gut this was equally valuable to me as â€˜The Dovekeepersâ€™. I was just a little ashamed at how much more I had to work - (Iâ€™m Jewish and read many Holocaust stories - shouldnâ€™t I know these basic facts by now?).....

THE HISTORY IN HERE THAT I DIDNâ€™T KNOW....which Iâ€™m grateful to having learned -many thanks to Alice Hoffman- is NOT SOOOO BASIC!!!

I did some serious thinking for a few days about this book - along with some re-reading of passages and dialogue. I also re- studied historical facts - filling holes in my education. Itâ€™s amazing to me how many gaps - â€˜stillâ€™ - of WWII history have been left behind. At least for me.

So....first acknowledgements: Iâ€™m deeply grateful to our award winning author. I appreciate Alice

The World That We Knew

Hoffman's dedication to writing about a remarkable period of history. I appreciate the immediate connection with the characters - her lush luminous prose - the extraordinary storytelling - and for being a real inspiration for me personally in opening my heart in seeing the importance to keep learning. I was not only submerged in the intricate relationships - but page after page I fell deeper into the richly imagined world....pausing to google historical communes and children's orphanages....(none of which I knew about).

Thank you (and I've said this 1 million times before! But I'm sincerely thankful), to Netgalley- and the publishers who have trusted me enough to offer an advance copy to review - and with this book - special thanks to Simon & Schuster's Publishing team.

It was tumultuous times. I asked myself - what was the most important personal goal in a world where evil was rampant everywhere you turned?

TO LIVE....the goal was TO STAY ALIVE... to LIVE!!! I thought about every possible successful turn in my life and those in the lives of others. What stands out is ~somebody~ was FOR ME... somebody was FOR MY FRIENDS.

For Lea...her mother, Hanni, was Lea's biggest ally. The world was black with horror. Millions of Jews tortured, separated by those they loved - many were made to dig their own graves - castrated - humiliated - millions murdered - at the rate of a thousand a day in Auschwitz. WE KNOW THESE THINGS.....

YET...ALWAYS HORRIFYING.....felt ~newly~ on any given day.

One of the strongest themes for me is the POWER of a MAGICAL-REMARKABLE - DEEPLY LOVING relationship between a mother and daughter. Throughout all the storytelling adventures from beginning to end....I was constantly moved by a mother's love for her daughter.

This excerpt is soooo beautiful.....speaks volumes:

“Night after night, in the trees or in the grass, Lea dreamed of her mother. She heard Hanni's voice in the wind, in birdsong, in falling leaves .

“I was with you when the roses bloomed with silver petals, when you saw Paris for the first time, when that boy looked at you, when you learned prayers in the convent, when you ran through the woods .

Soon after meeting twelve year old Lea, shy, but highly intelligent, (and having survived a frightening failed rape intent)... Hanni Kohn, her mother, will do anything in her power to have her daughter protected - which means sending Lea far away from Berlin.....save her from the Nazi regime.

Hanni's husband - a medical doctor - was murdered outside the Jewish Hospital. He had saved 720 souls. After Simon died - it was believed- and hoped for - in the Jewish religion - that “perhaps on the day that he left OLAM HaZEH, the world that we walk through each living day, those who had been saved we're waiting for him in OLAM HaBa, the World to Come .

Hanni refused to believe that her husband's life meant nothing.

The World That We Knew

“In Berlin, evil came to them slowly and then all at once.”

Hanni was determined that Lea would live and save more souls....

“It would go on and on, until there was more good in the world than evil.”

SUPPORT IS CALLED FOR....

Grandmother, Bobeshi, had told Lea stories and told her “to be a wolf.” Lea learned early to rise out of darkness- she became “the flower on a stem of thorns.”

Lea learned - from experience- about The Angel of Death. The “angel” took away the evil man who tried to pick a flower (Lea), and all he got was a handful of thorns....then he got what he deserved: death!

Grandmother Bobeshi was sick, bedridden. Hanni needed to honor the 5th commandment- she couldn’t leave her mother.

But each day groups of Jews were taken to Grosse Hamburger Strasse - then soon be sent to their deaths on trains to resettle Jews in the East.

NOT LEA.....

Tante Ruth was over hundred years old. Her father was a rabbi in Russia.....called a magician. Her own husband was named The Magician’s assistant. The men studied the Zohar, The Book of Splendour, - holy mysteries. Women were denied the opportunity to study- denied Torah study. However, Tante Ruth learned a lot listening to the men debate. After her husband died (who knew 72 kinds of wisdom that he learned from his father), Ruth believed in their miracles. It was believed that all creation came from thought, language, and mathematics.

Hanni turned to Tante Ruth - a magical brilliant pillar in their small community of Jews. Neighbors didn’t listen to Ruth when the Nazi policies first began to separate Jews from the rest of the population.

To fight the WICKED.....MAGIC and FAITH were needed.

This is how we learn of “The Golem.” The Golem was created by the use of 22 Hebrew letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

The Golem can see the future - among other things - including seeing the exact day and time of a person’s death. It can speak to angels. Ruth sent Hanni to speak to their local Rabbi - knowing the rabbi would refuse to speak to her. He would not allow another woman in the room other than his own wife....however- Hanni was to talk to the rabbi’s wife. The real miracle help came from the rabbi’s daughter- Ettie.

Ettie brings forth the creature with mud and water.

Ava Perrin, (six feet tall), is the name of Ettie’s creation. Ava, was created to protect Lea, who would follow her to the end of the earth and never abandon her.

Ava - made from clay - wasn’t suppose to “feel”....as she was created without a soul. Lea wasn’t so sure. Ava and a heron had a special relationship.

Ettie was bright as a whip - clever - independent - ambitious - defiant when necessary. Ettie’s mother wasn’t helpful to Hanni- but Ettie was.

The World That We Knew

Ettie wished she were born a boy. Only the most learned person (such as Ettie was), could use the 72 names of God to bring forth a Golem.

SUCCESS....(and Tante Ruth had said only men could bring a Golem to life)... ha!
Ettie was exceptional - she was born to fight. She re named herself Nicole Duval.

WE FOLLOW Ettie, (her younger sister Marta died), Lea, and Ava on a long journey.

So many men - had been entering The World To Come...OLAM HaBa. - THESE STRONG WOMEN NEEDED TO SURVIVE.

I learned a lot!!!! I didn't (until this book), know anything about the Huguenot residents of Le Chambon - Sur - Lignon - who made a haven for the Jewish people fleeing from the Nazis.

I also didn't know about Izieu: A Jewish orphanage.

In 1943, a school for children opened at Izieu.... a commune in eastern France.

A year later everyone was gone. The children were sent to Auschwitz. The French government said it was kindness to send the children to be with your parents. Different police were in collaboration with the Germans and all 42 children were taken to Montluc Prison. Not a single child survived.

You'll meet Julien - a Heron - Dr. Girard- learn of other communes - bombing in Vienna- visit Haute-Loire- ponder over sights, sounds, smells, language, and tidbits of details. Did you know that the German government forced every Jewish women to use the name Sarah after her own name on every official document? I didn't.

And....most you feel as if you know the main characters - and minor characters well....

If you are like me.... you'll be moved by a mother/ daughter strength that you just might either be a little jealous - that your relationship with your own mother was lacking OR....bask in the special love you did or do have with your mother.

A perfect gift to our mothers who read!!! ...more

The World That Never Was Kh2

I am not a fan of magical realism and, stylistically speaking, I don't care for narrative written as a fairy tale. Hoffman employs both. That said I had to consider if this novel works in terms of the author's intention and I think it does. The mother's love is palpable, the symbolism of the heron is effective, the research is solid and the ending is powerful. In addition, there are several very beautiful passages. But, the characters are one dimensional and we are told rather than shown which diminishes the overall forcefulness of this novel about one of the blackest periods of history. Hoffman readers will love this and many will disagree with me. That's fine. My rating reflects an objective point of view while my comments are, obviously, subjective. ...more

I am not a fan of magic realism. But Alice Hoffman is the exception that proves the rule, as I have loved every book of hers that I've read.

The book takes place during World War Two. Lea's mother, Hanni, knows she must send her daughter Lea, away from Berlin. Ava is a golem, a soulless creature created to act as a guardian to Lea. Ettie, the daughter of a rabbi, is the one who creates Ava, thereby linking the three of them. We hear from each of them with their individual stories. Each story reveals their strength, their love, their humanity, yes, even "soulless" Ava. It's not often that I care equally about multiple main characters. Once again, Hoffman is the exception to the rule.

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As always, Hoffman transports us. Numerous books have tackled the terror of the Nazi regime, yet Hoffman brought up things I've never read elsewhere. Her research was intense but is woven seamlessly into the stories. Primarily a story of survival, it also shows us the best and worst of humanity.

My thanks to netgalley and Simon & Schuster for an advance copy of this book. ...more

The World That God Only Knows

A little more than six years ago I read *The Golem and the Jinni*, (#1) and shortly after that, I read *The Enchanted Life of Adam Hope*, which I might have struggled with the concept of a man created out of earth and clay more had I not read *The Golem and the Jinni*, and I enjoyed both of those stories, but this one took my breath away.

Beautifully written, this story is shared with just the right touch of magical realism needed to lend it the air of a lyrical fairy-tale set in Germany and France dur

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Beautifully written, this story is shared with just the right touch of magical realism needed to lend it the air of a lyrical fairy-tale set in Germany and France during World War II. This golem brought to life by Ettie, the daughter of a rabbi, who has overheard her father create a golem once. And so Ettie creates this female being to protect Lea, daughter of Hanni, who must leave Berlin for her own safety. Strict rules come with the creation of such a creature, including ensuring the destruction after a limited period of time. Lea must leave for her own protection, but her mother can't leave her own mother behind, and so Hanni convinces Lea to go with Ava.

At its heart, this is a love story, but it is more about love in a general sense â€” our love of life, the everyday moments we take for granted, the beauty in the world isn't always so easily recognized in days like these, when living an ordinary, everyday kind of life isn't even possible. And yet, even in dark times â€” and these were very dark times â€” there always seems to be that thread of love and hope and perhaps most important of all - humanity. There is some romantic love, as well as embracing our love of this gift we've been given of life, and how to honor it by honoring the humanity in others, themes that flow through these pages. The always strong, beating heart of this, though, is the maternal love shown through Hanni's sacrifice for her daughter's benefit, and the maternal love of Ava, who represents the fiercely protective, nurturing maternal nature of mothers.

Set in a time of rising evil infecting the land, this is an extraordinary portrait of the never-ending nature, and power, of love.

Pub Date: 24 Sep 2019

Many thanks for the ARC provided by Simon & Schuster ...more

This is not my usual genre but in the capable hands of someone of the calibre of Alice Hoffman you

The World That We Knew

know it's going to be an interesting read. This is a very moving story of love and survival. As the cruel yoke of Nazism tightens via the Nuremberg Laws and thereafter the Final Solution in Germany and conquered Europe, Hanni Kohn in Berlin decides she has to save her daughter Lea by any means. Hanni is brave and fearless and she tries to teach Lea to be a "wolf". . Hanni employs all the magic at her disposal to ensure that Lea gets out of Germany. There is a wonderful image of Hanni sprinkling her coat with an invisibility mixture as she seeks help for Lea to create a golem to protect her and get her out of Berlin. The story traces Lea's journey out of Germany and into France as she tries to evade capture. At times the danger is palpable, the writing is beautiful, emotional and very powerful. This is a novel about strength and endurance against evil, in particular female strength. All the female characters are strong - Hanni, Lea, Ava, Ettie and Marianne and I felt invested in their survival. The male characters that stand out are brothers Julien and Victor. They encounter things that can only be described as horrific and most of the incidents are based on historical fact which blends really well into the storytelling. The author has clearly researched very widely in order to write this moving tale. This is a wonderfully written story with some beautiful imagery. Who could not love Ava dancing with the heron or the appearance of angels, some protective and Azriel, the harbinger of death. This is a book principally about love - Hanni for Lea, Lea for Julien, Marianne for Victor, Ava for Lea and the heron, Ettie for her sister. It's also about love of life as the characters strive to survive and help others to do so. The cruelty beggars belief especially the actions of Klaus Barbie as described towards the end of the book. The ending is not what I expected but I liked it. This is a fantastic book which will stay with me for a long time.

Thanks to NetGalley and Simon and Shuster for this ARC ...more

The World That We Knew Alice Hoffman

I have to admit that I was ambivalent about the description of this novel, but I was completely swept off of my feet. From the first line, you are pulled into the world painted by Alice Hoffman. Yes, this is historical fiction with a splash of magical realism; and yes, it is awesome. This book is filled with insightful quotes, and will saturate you with sensibility and nostalgia.

From the involvement of the Huguenots, Jewish resistance groups, Operation Spring Breeze, etc., I was blown away by t I have to admit that I was ambivalent about the description of this novel, but I was completely swept off of my feet. From the first line, you are pulled into the world painted by Alice Hoffman. Yes, this is historical fiction with a splash of magical realism; and yes, it is awesome. This book is filled with insightful quotes, and will saturate you with sensibility and nostalgia.

From the involvement of the Huguenots, Jewish resistance groups, Operation Spring Breeze, etc., I was blown away by the amount of history she incorporated. I would say that there is more history surrounding the characters in this novel than fantasy. While this novel does bare magic, the story revolves around the setting in history.

The fantasy advances the internal conflict within the social setting of Germany and France itself while magical realism vividly paints this picture over the atmosphere of WWII that have never been put into words before. Beasts, angels, and fate contribute to the blanket of symbolism and metaphorical environment of Nazi occupied territories.

I did not enjoy when the golem is made in the beginning. The creation itself seemed to unnecessarily drag on and it almost made me want to stop reading. However, it was only for a chapter, although a tiresome long chapter. This was minute and not enough to take off a star.

If you like WWII novels, I recommend adding this to your list.

Thank you to NetGalley, Simon & Schuster, and Alice Hoffman for giving me the opportunity to read and review this novel. The opinions in this review are my own. ...more

Special thanks to NetGalley and the publisher for a free, electronic ARC of this novel.

Release date: September 24, 2019

â€œThe World that We Knewâ€• tells the story and struggles of three young women during WWII. To save her daughter, Hanni knows she must send Lea away, but her mother is sick and cannot make the journey so Hanni comes up with another plan and soon, Lea and her magical guardian Ava are escaping to France. Ettie and her sister are also on the run, and when her sister is killed Ettie Special thanks to NetGalley and the publisher for a free, electronic ARC of this novel.

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The World That We Knew

“The World that We Knew” tells the story and struggles of three young women during WWII. To save her daughter, Hanni knows she must send Lea away, but her mother is sick and cannot make the journey so Hanni comes up with another plan and soon, Lea and her magical guardian Ava are escaping to France. Ettie and her sister are also on the run, and when her sister is killed Ettie is left to her own devices as she travels through the French countryside, desperate to avenge her sister’s death. Through it all, the women find love, magic and even peace, while they come to terms with their own strengths and talents.

Hoffman has taken the war-torn desolation of World War II Europe, and infused it with magic, love and hope. Lea searches for years for the love she left behind, while Ettie and Ava both find love in unexpected places. The novel speaks to the powers that we hold inside us, that only emerge when our situations are bleakest, if we still hold on to hope.

The novel alternates so that we hear from various characters in the novel during the same time period. Each character tells a unique tale, each one detailing the grim realities of war and the power of the human spirit.

I would’ve preferred to follow Ava and Lea’s story more closely, and had them take the centre storyline throughout the novel, merely for the magic and otherworldliness of Ava and her creation. That being said, the interconnected storylines speak to a deeper truth of all humans being connected by their tragedy and by their quest for love. The characters themselves are full of bravery, naiveté, and strength (that they don’t even know they have), and are likable in every way.

Hoffman continues to deliver a powerful message of love and humanity, while interspersing some magic in the way that only she can. The supernatural being of Ava is both brave and vulnerable, and as the story continues, it becomes easier and easier to root for her. The ending, too, delivers in an honest way, providing the bittersweet satisfaction that World War II novels must.

Definitely a novel that will make you think, and hope, and love, Hoffman delivers a heart-wrenching and poignant novel on the power of love and human kindness and how it can change the world.

...more

The World That Made New Orleans

This is one of the most heartbreakingly beautiful books I've read. I don't know much of anything about Jewish Mysticism or folklore, but it's woven into the story in such a stunning way. It does take some suspension of disbelief to accept the premise of the story, a mother begging a rabbi's daughter to create a golem to bring her daughter to safety, a dancing heron who loves the golem and the angel of death. Yet, I didn't once feel that the importance, the depth and breadth of the suffering of t

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The writing is superb. The story telling is magnificent. I loved how the chapters alternate between the characters and how their stories connect and how more characters are introduced. There are stories within the story - the white wolf, the silver roses. It begins with Hanni and Lea and Ettie and Ava, then expands to include the people they love, the roles that some of them play in the resistance. I felt so emotionally connected to these characters . I was afraid for what could happen to any of them, each of them facing the angel of death at some point.

I loved Hoffman's note to the reader in the beginning, about writing, about remembering, about how the book came to be and her thoughts on fairy tales and life and I think I was hooked then. She tells the reader how she met a woman who as a young Jewish child was sent away by her parents to a convent and because of this she survived the Holocaust. She wanted Hoffman to write her life story. She wanted her story told so it would be remembered. But Hoffman told her that she couldn't since her interests were fairy tales, myths, and folktales. . She later realized that "the tale of a child separated from her parents, is the central motif of many fairy tales ..." and that fairy tales contain "the deepest psychological truths." And so we have this beautifully written novel where she remembers the woman's story, and enables us not to forget, which for me is a hallmark of Holocaust literature. It's also a tribute to the people of the resistance who helped to save as many Jews as they could, thousands of them children, a tribute to their unselfish bravery and goodness.

The World That We Knew

It's an amazing portrayal of the power of love and hope even in the most dark and dismal of times. I have read just a few novels by this prolific author and I'm determined to read more.

I read this with Diane and Esil. As always I enjoyed our thoughtful discussions.

I received an advanced copy of this book from Simon & Schuster through Edelweiss. ...more

4.5 stars, rounded up

What would you do to save your child? If you, like Hanni in Berlin in 1941, knew that your 12 year old daughter could never survive the onslaught that your gut tells you is coming, would you be brave enough to send her away? Could you send her alone? Or would you, like Hanni, find a way to ensure a protector for her, whatever the price? The path that Lea, Hanni's daughter, must take to make it safely to end of the war will lead her through Paris streets and countryside convents, beekeeper's cottages and the terror of not even being sure you are worth the sacrifice that's been made. 4.5 stars, rounded up

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Lea is not the only main character in this story, but she is a thick strand of color in a tapestry made by people trying to survive, people trying to love, people bent on revenge and, in this story, even one that's not really a person at all. If you like your stories with magical realism - if you like the world to have a spark of life that's all its own, with animals and angels and the fates having a mind of their own, then this story of love and survival in the midst of war is for you. It touched my heart, it hurt me, the emotions of this story rang true. I liked that it was a twist on the World War 2 Novel and I liked that faith could make magic. In my mind, I can still see some of the images that Hoffman created and for a story set in a time of such horror, the ones for me that really stick out are the ones where she has laid bare our humanity and made us want to grasp it with both hands. ...more

The World That I Know

Question I asked myself. All Holocaust books are heartbreaking, Would this book become just another sad story without the magical realism? I think that element made this book memorable, one that stands out, unforgettable. Ava represents a mother's love, someone who is not human, but more human than many others during this inhuman time. I loved when the doctor thought, if one can love, one has a soul. So much evil, so many deaths and yet so many good people that went above and beyond. So many elements combined, a heron I adored, showing there are many other species able to love. So I decided the magical realism allowed Hoffman to interject a great deal of love and wonder into a story of a time that represented, hatred, horror, death and loss. It provided an emotional element that went above and beyond. I loved the ending, it was just right.

I still want a knight for Christmas and now I've added three angels to my list.

My monthly read with Angela and Esil. This book provided much fodder for our discussion.

ARC from Edelweiss ...more

The World That We Knew is the twenty-eighth stand-alone novel by best-selling American author, Alice Hoffman. By 1941, life is difficult and dangerous for Jews living in Berlin. Widow Hanni Kohn knows they must escape, but her mother's paralysis means she can't leave. To send her beloved twelve-year-old daughter, Lea alone to family in Paris would be folly, so she uses her last resort, precious family jewels, to pay for a protector.

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Ettie is the eldest daughter of a rabbi, and has surreptitiously absorbed his teachings and rituals. When her mother unreservedly refuses to help Hanni, Ettie claims to know how to create a golem. Her price: passage on the night train to Paris for her sister Marta and herself. The golem that the women create is unlike any other: a woman whose only mission is to keep Lea safe. But a golem which exists too long becomes too powerful, and when Lea later learns what she must ultimately do, she is torn.

In Paris, Lea and her "cousin", Ava join the household of Professor Andre Levi, whose maid, Marianne, has just abandoned her post to return to her father on his farm. Ava's powers allow her to easily fill the role, but her surveillance of Lea cannot prevent the close connection that forms between her and young Julien Levi, no matter who disapproves. But Paris, too, is becoming unsafe for Jews, and Ava removes Lea to another shelter. Lea barely has time to implore Julien "Stay alive." Who knows if they will ever see each other again.

This is a story that spans the years of the Second World War and ranges from Berlin to Paris to several parts of country France. Information about the golem and other mystical aspects is seamlessly integrated into the narrative. The cast of characters is not small, but many of them connect and reconnect, if only fleetingly. These represent the many real-life brave, generous, ordinary people who had a myriad of reasons to help the persecuted and resist the oppressor.

The circumstances of minor characters are often detailed using a small vignette of their lives. Where they encounter Ava, Hoffman uses the golem's power of knowledge to note the fate of their loved ones and she frequently takes the opportunity to include the staggering statistics about the incarceration and death of those persecuted by the Nazi regime. To make it more interesting, she throws her characters the occasional dilemma.

Of course, among the many deaths, Hoffman realistically does not spare all of her protagonists for a Hollywood happy-ever-after. But rather than concentrating on atrocities, Hoffman makes this a moving and uplifting tale by showcasing those kind and charitable characters, giving them a starring role. Readers should be ready for some lump-in-the-throat moments. A stirring and thought-provoking read. This unbiased review is from an uncorrected proof copy provided by NetGalley and Simon and Schuster
...more

The World That Was

She didn't yet realize that her life story, the tale of a child separated from her parents, is the central motif of many fairy tales, reaching the most vulnerable parents of our hearts and souls and engaging our deepest fears; fairy tales are perhaps the most autobiographical of all stories, containing the deepest psychological truths.

These truths, set forth by Alice Hoffman in her latest masterpiece, provide a sort of primer for the kind of writing readers will find. *The World That We Knew* is tragic, courageous, wonderfully magical and deeply personal. Its allusions to bread crumb trails, wolves and hunters, as well as heroines and heroes, all feel appropriate to the WWII France setting which was undeniably filled with evil and monsters.

"That was how evil spoke. It made its own corrupt sense; it swore that the good were evil, and that the evil had come to save mankind. It brought up ancient fears and scattered them on the street like pearls."

"Your grief won't go away; it's not a door you can close, or a book you can put back on a shelf, or a kiss you can give back once it's given. This is the way the world is now. Keep the worst things to yourself, like a bone in your throat."

As in all great fairy tales, Hoffman creates a world so honest and true to itself that the inclusion of angels and golems feels not just right, but necessary. I am a sucker for magical realism anyway, but few authors do it better than Hoffman. She provides historical and religious context for these suspensions of disbelief; in fact, Jewish mysticism is an essential component of this drama (another win for me).

Hoffman is definitely more Grimm's fairy tales than Disney; she sets her young characters in the midst of dark and confusing forests, knowing they are hunted, relying only on their own cunning, courage and instinct. She has once again created incredibly brave and strong women determined to survive. They are not pretty damsels; they are beautiful warriors.

"Vengeance was just beneath her skin, a shadow self, her true self, the one who had been holding her sister's hand, the one who ran into the woods, who wanted to learn everything she could be taught, starting now."

So it's great historical fiction with a good dose of magic - that's a solid four stars. Where the 5th star shines through for me is the deeper theme about what it is to be human. Again, the backdrop of WWII and its presence of monsters provides the perfect counterpoint to the burgeoning consciousness of Hoffman's protagonists (both human and not). I won't give away any more, but the second half of this novel took me into an incredibly deep and thoughtful place and I simply could not put it down.

The World That We Knew

“I remember when my mother would do anything for me, when we discovered we were not hunters, but wolves, when the world was taken away from us, when the souls of our brothers and sisters rose into the trees, when we ran through the woods, when I loved you above all others and you loved me in return.”

“Fairy tales tell us that we may be lost, we may be forsaken, but there is a path.”

I am indebted to my wonderful friend Maureen who secured an autographed ARC inscribed to me. She knows how much I love Alice Hoffman and knew I wouldn't want to wait for September. Book friends are the best friends. ...more

Its 1941 and the Nazi's are invading Berlin. Hanni Kohn sends her daughter away to save her from the Nazi Regime. Ettie a rabbi's daughter runs away from home to save herself from the Nazi Regime and Ava who is a Jewish Mystical creature created to keep Lea safe.

I loved this book. I usually do not pick up a book with magical realism because it's not for me but this only had a tad bit in it. The flow of the story worked so well for me that I finished it quickly. This story broke my heart over and over again. Its 1941 and the Nazi's are invading Berlin. Hanni Kohn sends her daughter away to save her from the Nazi Regime. Ettie a rabbi's daughter runs away from home to save herself from the Nazi Regime and Ava who is a Jewish Mystical creature created to keep Lea safe.

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THANK YOU Netgalley and Simon & Shuster for providing and ARC of The World That We Knew By Alice Hoffman ...more