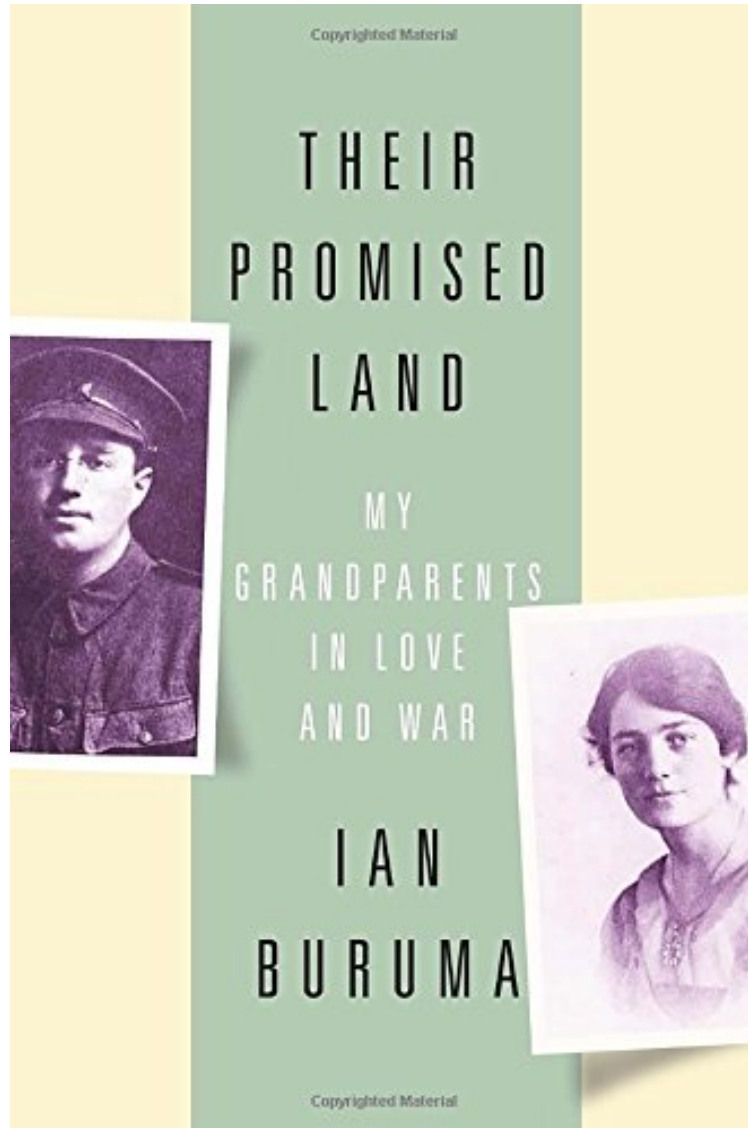


[Online library] Their Promised Land: My Grandparents in Love and War

Their Promised Land: My Grandparents in Love and War

Ian Buruma

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Ian Buruma : Their Promised Land: My Grandparents in Love and War before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Their Promised Land: My Grandparents in Love and War:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. decency and good manners are the normBy Daniel H. BrownA touching memoir of a devoted couple by an admiring grandson told primarily through letters the grandparents wrote to each other. The classical music loving, upper middle class, highly moral Schlesingers were thoroughly English in a way now vanished. The superiority of Englishness, to my grandparents, was never in doubt. Their superiority would

be more often expressed by being especially polite to foreigners, while being careful not to seem patronizing. The Schlesingers were born into wealthy, religious German Jewish families who probably came to England in the 1870s. The Schlesingers, while never fully abandoning their religion or their German heritage, were proudly English. It is a pleasure reading a book where restraint, decency and good manners are the norm. 6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Yes, this is how life was for educated Jews in England in the first half of the 20th century. By Ann M. Altman. Yes. My parents were Jewish refugees in England, arriving in 1939. My father fought with the British and married my mother at the end of the war. I grew up in England, leaving after college. Ian Buruma's book examines and describes, accurately and sensitively, the efforts made by his Jewish grandparents to be English but never to deny their Jewish heritage during the decades that preceded my parents' arrival in England and during World War 2. In the 20th century, Jews in England (myself included!) fitted in but... not quite. Buruma's grandparents (and my parents) were never oblivious of the debt that they owed to their adopted country but they recognized and accepted the undercurrent of antisemitism - Buruma's grandfather could not get a position at any of the prestigious hospitals in London; my father felt similarly discriminated against at a certain point in his life. At the same time, all of these so-called assimilated Jews had and expressed their own snobbery about Jews of all social classes who exhibited the characteristics that antisemites are so quick to hold up for ridicule (and worse). Anyone interested in the life of English Jews during the last century will find much of interest in this book. It is written with warmth and love but is rigorous and does not shy away from sometimes unfavorable analysis. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The Issues of Identity Explored in Historical Context. By doh. A striking history of a German Jewish couple, born in England and expressing their feelings about belonging to England while exhibiting mixed emotions about their Jewish identity-- not rejecting it but being critical of other Jews whose actions they feel opens their group to opprobrium. They also reflect the cultural attitudes of their English context in terms of race and gender, but in a complicated way that the author managed to convey well to the reader. As a study of issues of identity as well as the story of two real people and their family loyalties, it makes for compelling reading.

A family history of surpassing beauty and power: Ian Buruma's account of his grandparents enduring love through the terror and separation of two world wars. During the almost six years England was at war with Nazi Germany, Winifred and Bernard Schlesinger, Ian Buruma's grandparents, and the film director John Schlesinger's parents, were, like so many others, thoroughly sundered from each other. Their only recourse was to write letters back and forth. And write they did, often every day. In a way they were just picking up where they left off in 1918, at the end of their first long separation because of the Great War that swept Bernard away to some of Europe's bloodiest battlefields. The thousands of letters between them were part of an inheritance that ultimately came into the hands of their grandson, Ian Buruma. Now, in a labor of love that is also a powerful act of artistic creation, Ian Buruma has woven his own voice in with theirs to provide the context and counterpoint necessary to bring to life, not just a remarkable marriage, but a class, and an age. Winifred and Bernard inherited the high European cultural ideals and attitudes that came of being born into prosperous German-Jewish migr families. To young Ian, who would visit from Holland every Christmas, they seemed the very essence of England, their spacious Berkshire estate the model of genteel English country life at its most pleasant and refined. It wasn't until years later that he discovered how much more there was to the story. At its heart, *Their Promised Land* is the story of cultural assimilation. The Schlesingers were very British in the way their relatives in Germany were very German, until Hitler destroyed that option. The problems of being Jewish and facing anti-Semitism even in the country they loved were met with a kind of stoic discretion. But they showed solidarity when it mattered most. As the shadows of war lengthened again, the Schlesingers mounted a remarkable effort, which Ian Buruma describes movingly, to rescue twelve Jewish children from the Nazis and see to their upkeep in England. Many are the books that do bad marriages justice; precious few books take readers inside a good marriage. In *Their Promised Land*, Buruma has done just that; introducing us to a couple whose love was sustaining through the darkest hours of the century. Look for Ian's new book, *A Tokyo Romance*, in March, 2018.

Their Promised Land is a carefully and admirably written, highly readable work of social history told charmingly in a most intimate way through a close perusal of family correspondence. Buruma writes of British-born Jews of the upper-middle class with a great, sympathetic perspicacity and sweetness; these are after all his grandparents who are his subject and, most revealingly, he traces with precision the effect on their lives of being Jews of German origin in their beloved England during the two world wars. Philip Roth. One comes away from this small but powerful book with a deep fondness and respect for its two central characters and for the incredible devotion they shared, not only with each other, but with an England that was both real and an extension of their own admirable idealism. Washington Times. A fascinating story. The Guardian. Bernard and Win Schlesinger are appealing characters whose personalities come through in their many decades of correspondence, but *Their Promised Land* is best when it explicitly explores the friction between Britishness and Jewishness, between national loyalty and tribal, or ethnic, or official religious identification, between that old, old desire for belonging and the inevitable necessity of standing at an odd angle from the only world you've ever known. The Forward. It was the good fortune of their grandson, historian Ian Buruma, to

discover hundreds of their often mundane but cumulatively revealing letters. Buttressed by his memories and additional reporting, they form the backbone of *Their Promised Land*, an intimate, rambling, charming, and ultimately moving memoir and social history about the competing pulls of romantic love, family, country, and religious heritage. Boston Globe On the face of it, this is the very definition of a vanity project, a scholar believing the lives of his fireplug of a grandfather and patriotic grandmother worth of investigating when they were just, for lack of a less disparaging term, ordinary people. But Mr. Buruma has a broader purpose here, and he regards the letters with a historians sensibility. The Schlesingers are important not only in their idiosyncrasy which emerges wondrously through their own words but also because they embodied a type of diasporic Jew so prevalent in the 19th and 20th centuries, and not unknown today. [while] questions of class, culture, and nationality give the book its worth, there is something else that sustains Mr. Burumas interest even more: the mystery of a passionate marriage that, at least in the letters, never seems to cool over time. Wall Street Journal If you've ever complained that your grandparents were dull, then you didn't have grandparents like Bernard and Winifred Schlesinger [An] exceptional book. Minneapolis Star Tribune A wholly understanding, moving account of what it meant to be Jewish and English in one of the most troubled times of the last century. The Schlesingers chose to be English and Jewish, both insiders and outsiders, a choice that was possible in a liberal, relatively tolerant Britain. But there is a dark side to this sunlit story. Burumas voyage into the past is a warning as well as a celebration of lost lives. Somehow we must ensure that our societies allow outsiders to flourish, however they choose to do it. The New York Times Book In a fluid, novelistic narrative, Buruma not only captures a remarkable marriage, but also a particular segment of English society assimilated, upper-middle-class Jews. This illuminating story of cultural assimilation and identity will resonate with many readers. a moving, intimate portrait. Publishers Weekly (starred review) A beautiful and complex love story that lasted through triumphs and disasters, years of separation, anti-Semitic microaggressions, and social and family pressures. Burumas work is well-paced, absorbing, and gives a human face to some of the darkest eras of contemporary European history. Readers interested in biography, Judaism, social history, European history, the history of both World Wars, and/or a good old-fashioned love story will find much here to appreciate. Library Journal (starred review) A fascinating and memorable personal family story [A] stirring memoir Booklist The history of assimilation is often obscured by misunderstanding both ethical and philosophical. In *Their Promised Land*, Ian Buruma offers a searching, tender memorial of his grandparents marriage that is, at the same time, a clarifying study in the complicated pleasures and discontents of multiple identity. Adam Thirlwell Ian Buruma, the critic, is justly famous for his ferocious acuity. Ian Buruma, the grandson, brings that same clarity of observation to this exceptional memoir, but he also writes with an elegiac tenderness that may surprise and will deeply move both his fans, and those readers who have yet to discover his magisterial gifts. Judith Thurman "In this warmly affectionate, richly textured family chronicle, Ian Buruma draws on his own memories and a treasure trove of intimate letters, to uncover a moving love story, and paint a vivid picture of a seemingly idyllic world darkened by unexpected shadows. Informed by Burumas long-standing concerns as historian and cultural critic, *Their Promised Land* is an unsentimental elegy for a vanished cosmopolitan epoch, and an homage to lives made extraordinary by fidelity to ordinary virtues. A fascinating, subtle, wonderfully readable book." Eva Hoffman Buruma impressively captures his grandparents' remarkable lives in this insightful narrative. The author shapes his family's labor of a lifetime into a scintillating work of art. Kirkus (starred) To find a dusty cache of historic letters is a writers dream. To discover that these letters not only span two world wars, but follow the trajectory of two lovers who become the loving grandparents of idyllic holidays spent in a grand house in the English countryside, is to strike literary gold. From these letters, Ian Buruma has woven an utterly engrossing story of cultivated, upper class German Jews who grew up in England and made its values their own. On the way, he probes anti-Semitism in all its guises and shifting social attitudes. At once family memoir and history, this is a book to linger over and savour. Lisa Appignanesi, author of *Trials of Passion* and *All About Love* About the Author Ian Buruma is the Paul W. Williams Professor at Bard College. His previous books include *Year Zero*, *The China Lover*, *Murder in Amsterdam*, *Occidentalism*, *Gods Dust*, *Behind the Mask*, *The Wages of Guilt*, *Bad Elements*, and *Taming the Gods*. His newest book, *A Tokyo Romance*, will be on sale 3/6/2018.