



Vol. 3, No. 15, April 16, 2021

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## From the Editor



Happy Friday Pages of the Past readers! I hope all is going well in your world. Are you getting enough reading time? I know that I'm not. But I'm making my way through some books, although at a slower pace than I like.

Right now, I'm working my way through *How to Make a Life*, by this week's featured author, Florence Reiss Kraut. It's an excellent book based on family stories from the past. I'm enjoying it immensely, and others have too, as evidenced by the awards it's already collecting. Keep reading to find out more about how this book came into being and the writing journey the author had while writing it.

Also, this week we're sharing news of another book birthday, *Two Fatherlands*, by one of our favorite authors who has been on a writing spree the past year that's surely put me to shame. Congratulations on another new release Chrystyna Lucyk-Berger!

Stay tuned for future issues –In the weeks ahead we have author interviews scheduled with Alexa Kang, Rachel Zolotov, JJ Toner, Clare Flynn, Ellie Midwood, and lots more!

Trisha

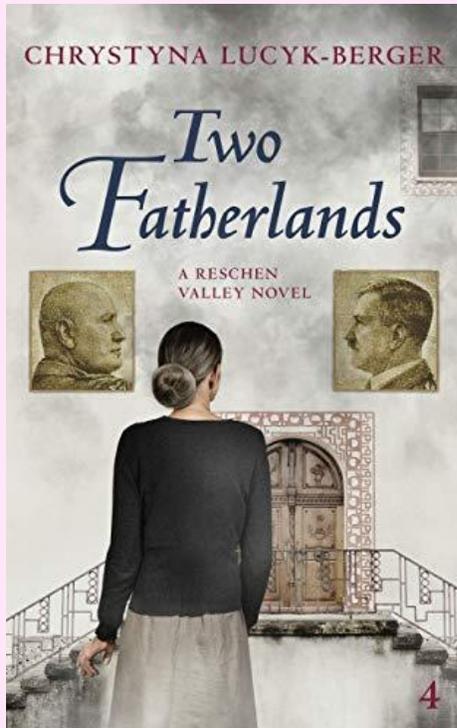
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## New Releases!

# Two Fatherlands

Chrystyna Lucyk-Berger



It's a dangerous time to be a dissident...

1938. Northern Italy. Since saving Angelo Grimani's life 18 years earlier, Katharina is grappling with how their lives have since been entwined. As construction on the Reschen lake reservoir begins, the Reschen Valley community is torn apart into two fronts - those who want to stay no matter what comes, and those who hold out hope that Hitler will bring Tyrol back into the fold.

Back in Bolzano, Angelo finds one fascist politician who may have the power to help Katharina and her community, but there is a group of corrupt players eager to have a piece of him. When they realise that Angelo and Katharina are joining forces, they turn to a strategy of conquering and dividing to weaken both the community and Angelo's efforts.

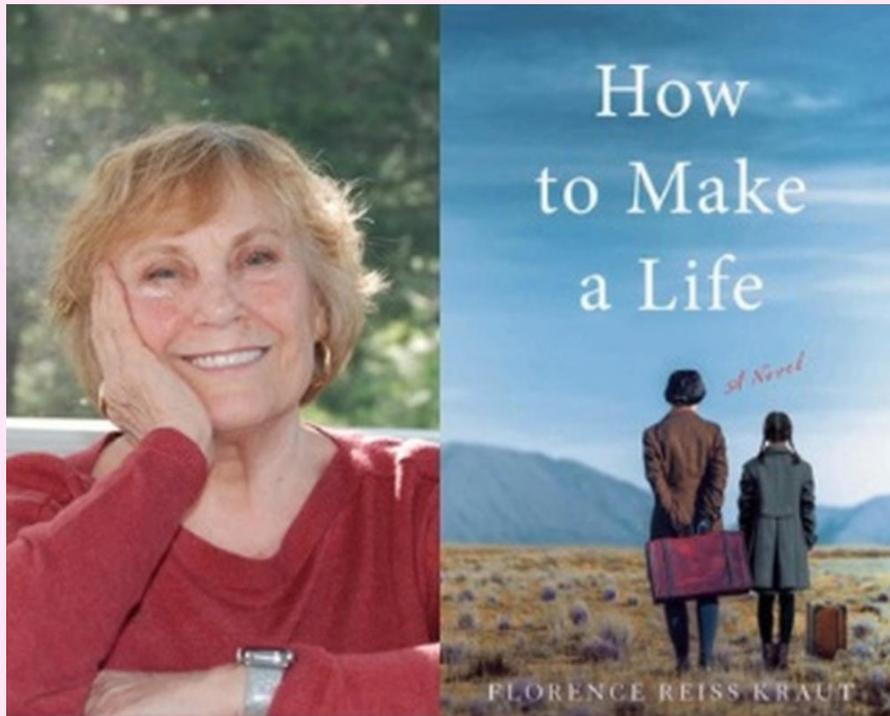
Meanwhile, the daughter Angelo shares with Katharina – Annamarie - has fled to Austria to pursue her acting career but the past she is running away from lands her directly into the arms of a new adversary: the Nazis. She goes as far as Berlin,

and as far as Goebbels, to pursue her dreams, only to realise that Germany is darker than any place she's been before.

Angelo puts aside his prejudices and seeks alliances with old enemies; Katharina finds ingenious ways to preserve what is left of her community, and Annamarie wrests herself from the black forces of Nazism with plans to return home. But when Hitler and Mussolini present the Tyroleans with “The Option”, the residents are forced to choose between Italian and German nationhood with no guarantee that they will be able to stay in Tyrol at all!

Angelo, Katharina and Annamarie are trapped on separate fronts, forced to take a stand, but their enemies lurk where they thought was safest. Out of the ruins of war, will they be able to find their way back to one another and pick up the pieces?

## Author Spotlight: Florence Kraut



**Hello Florence Reiss Kraut. We're excited to chat with you today about your writing and your recently published book, *How to Make a Life*. What drew you to write this particular story?**

*How to Make a Life* is a family saga of four generations of an immigrant family over 100 years. I am part of a huge and very close family (I had 22 aunts and uncles and 27 first cousins) and I grew up amidst the hubbub and love and conflict of all those people. When I was growing up, I heard stories about family and friends from my aunts while they were sitting in coffee klatches in the kitchen, or preparing large meals together, or washing and drying dishes. From those early experiences I was mesmerized by story.

I always wanted to write a novel about family, but I wasn't sure just how. Over years of classes, and practice and writing and publishing short stories, I learned. Later, when I became a social worker and therapist in a family service agency, I again heard the stories of my clients, and gradually I found the nub of my novel: an immigrant family that flees a horrendous trauma in the old country to come to America to make a good life. The characters, and the incidents, and the interweaving of generational problems came from all I had learned in my family and my life as a social worker.

**Your tale follows a family through four generations, from when Ida and her daughter Bessie fled the Ukraine for America in 1905. What was it like writing a tale that wove four generations together?**

It was enormously fun and creative. I worked hard to make the characters well rounded with both strengths and weaknesses. I love each of them with all their flaws. Readers tell me that the people in the book are so real they feel they know them. They remind readers of their own families. I think that was because of my years of experience in my family and working with families.

One of the themes of the book is that the actions of the people in one generation effect the lives of the people that come in later generations. So, Ida's decision to leave her home country and the remnants of her larger family and come to America alone with her daughter had enormous impact on the generations. And Bessie's decision not to send Ruby to a Psychiatric hospital similarly impacted her other children. There are many other examples of this throughout the book.

**Do you have any favorite methods you use in researching your books?**

Researching for historical fiction books today is much easier than it was even 15 or 20 years ago because of the Internet. Everything is available on the internet. Dates of events, descriptions of events, articles and of course, books. It was not always easy doing the research, but it was enormous fun, although sometimes I would get distracted by facts and information that I wasn't really looking for. People call it going down a rabbit-hole, and I think that is a great description.

Several chapters take place in foreign countries, all of which I have visited. The descriptions and tastes and smells are all things I have experienced myself. There is nothing like being there to make your story come alive.

**Tell us about one of your favorite characters from *How to Make a Life*.**

I like to say, as I do as a mother, that I don't have a favorite child. I like all of my characters, even with their flaws. But I do connect more with some than with others. Jenny is one of my favorite characters because she is a caretaker. From the time she is a young girl, she is the one called on to take care of Ruby when Ruby has one of her mental health episodes. She takes care of Ruby's children when Ruby cannot. She cares for her niece Sarah's daughter when Sarah disappears. And she is the supreme caretaker of her beloved husband when he gets ill and ages. She is the one the family relies on in all kinds of circumstances. But she is not perfect, and like all human beings she sometimes resents her role, and then, even though she knows it is wrong, she commits an act of betrayal that has repercussions for the family and her whole life. I love her with all her flaws.

**Did writing historical fiction present any challenges?**

In historical fiction you have to continually remind yourself that the mores and beliefs and behavior of people in earlier times was different than it is today. Behaviors and actions that we accept as all right in the twenty-first century, was not all right in earlier decades. Although emotions may be similar, behaviors were not. Premarital sex, out of wedlock births, homosexuality, were not accepted behaviors then. Women did not have the same rights in previous centuries. The writer always has to keep those differences in mind. And, of course, you must make sure that your historical facts are correct, or your reader will not trust anything else you say.

***How to Make a Life* covers a large area of time through the generations that it follows. Were any of the segments of time a favorite one for you to write about?**

I loved writing about the early years of the Twentieth Century because those were not my years, and I had to research them. Writing about the Battle of Sicily in the Second World War was especially challenging, but so was writing about the Great Depression. I'm going to be using that era in my next book too.

**I see that you also write essays and are published in several different publications. How would you compare essay writing to book writing?**

Most of the essays that I wrote and published were personal essays, so I liken them to memoir. They draw on my life experiences, describe them from my personal point of view, and draw conclusions from that, so they fall in the category of non-fiction. My novel is historical fiction, therefore different from memoir and non-fiction, and, of course, a novel is much longer and covers more than one theme and subject than does an essay.

**Is there anything you'd like to share with us that I didn't ask you about?**

Many of my readers ask me if I had trouble keeping track of all my characters and their ages over 100 years. I confess that I made myself an Excel spreadsheet with the characters on the side of the page and the chapters in columns, so I always knew how old the people were as we went through the years. And, of course, at the beginning of the book, I had a family tree, so my readers knew who each character's parents were and who they married. Otherwise, mistakes are made.

**You can find *How to Make a Life* here:**

Amazon.com. <https://amzn.to/3mwUg0x>

Indiebound.org. <https://bit.ly/3d1pnhF>

Barnes & Noble. com <https://bit.ly/39Vi5dp>

**You can find Florence Reiss Kraut here:**

Facebook.com: <https://bit.ly/3uyssM7>

Instagram: <https://bit.ly/32bGfMF>

Website: [florencereisskraut.com](http://florencereisskraut.com)

BIO: Florence Reiss Kraut is a native New Yorker, raised and educated in four of the five boroughs of New York City. She holds a BA in English and a master's in social work. She worked for thirty years as a clinician, a family therapist, and the CEO of a family service agency before retiring to write and travel widely. She has published personal essays for *The New York Times* and her fiction has appeared in journals including *The Evening Street Press*, *SNReview*, *The Westchester Review*, and others. She lives with her husband in Rye, New York.

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