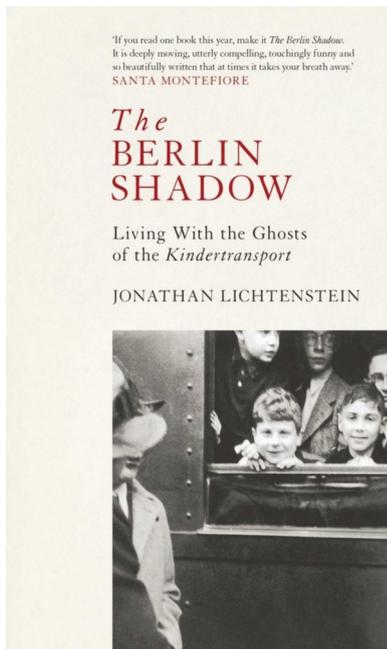


Book Reviews

Book reviews are welcomed from all members, not just those in the Reading Groups. Please email your reviews to Margaret Mason margaret@u3a-llandrindod.org.uk

These following reviews come from Robert Bevan, Ian Paget and Karyn Wynne Evans.



If the name Hans Lichtenstein is familiar, it is not surprising, Hans was a much loved and respected Doctor in the Llandrindod Wells surgery for many years. He was also the first Vice Chair of our U3A. This first review is of a book written by his son.

The Berlin Shadow: Living with the Ghosts of the Kindertransport - By Jonathan Lichtenstein

The authoress Santa Montefiore has commented on this book *'If you read one book this year, make it the Berlin Shadow. It is deeply moving, utterly compelling, touchingly funny and, so beautifully written that at times it takes your breath away.'* I can only agree entirely with all that but, how to describe it?

These notes are being written within minutes of my finishing reading what is at once a book for all who knew, or even had some passing experience of Hans, as well as for a much wider readership who knew him not at all.

At one level it is a kind of travelogue; an account of a son's journey with his father to the place from which he had escaped as a

12 year old boy, Berlin, just before the Nazi net closed over the Jewish population with consequences which are so well known. That escape, together with Han's traumatic experiences involving several family suicides, remained with him and continued to haunt him for the rest of his life.

However, the book is much more than that. It is a deeply moving exploration of the relationship between father and son. A difficult, even fractured relationship whereby the son could be said to share the father's mental anguish at one remove from its cause.

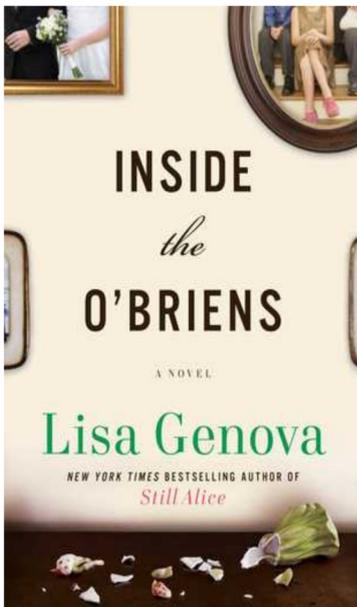
Many of us who knew, admired and loved Hans, whether as friends, colleagues, or patients were well aware of his exceptional qualities as well as his idiosyncracies. He was a larger than life character. A man of constant action, restlessly impatient yet deeply sympathetic and understanding; the most loyal and reliable friend and enemy to none. Yet underneath it all was a man uncertain of his place in the world - a fragility which is common to all who are human.

Jonathan's writing is a joy. This is a work of real literary worth written from the perspective of an 'insider' - an eldest son- it explores Han's character as no one else could. Yet in spite of the seriousness of the theme there are passages of high comedy. Indeed some of the dialogue is unforgettably hilarious.

The mountaineer's reply to the question 'why did you want to climb that peak?' is well known to be 'because it's there'. If Jonathan were to be asked why he chose to write this book I feel sure his reply would be 'because I had to'. A book like this must have smouldered within him throughout his life and writing it must have been a cathartic experience.

Bursting into flames as it has now done provides a gift to all of us who knew Hans as well as a permanent memorial to a man of exceptional stature.

Robert Bevan

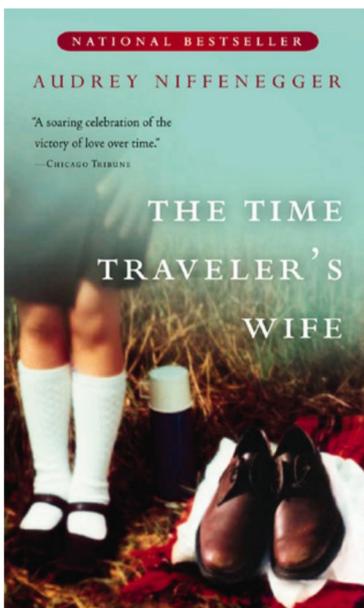


Inside the O'Briens, by Lisa Genova.

A story about a family who have to live with the discovery that any of the family members may have Huntington's disease, after the family's father Joe is diagnosed with that condition. Before the diagnosis they all have to live through Joe becoming increasingly strangely behaved.

The portrayal of how humans under extreme physical and mental pressures can still find time to love and survive as long as possible and show the resilience of the human spirit is heart-warming.

Ian Paget

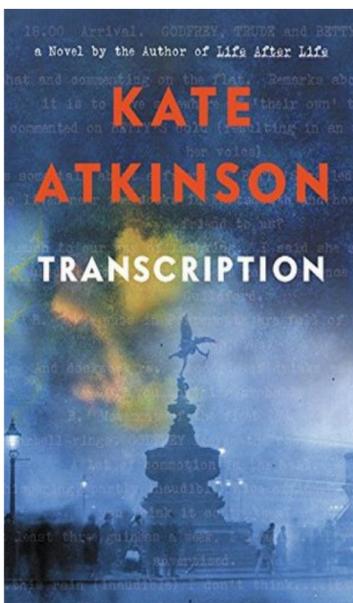


The Time Travellers Wife by Audrey Niffenegger

Is the (chronologically confusing) love story of Clare Abshire and Henry deTamble. Clare knew Henry almost all her life, though Henry first met Clare when she was 20 and he was 28. Even so he also shared Clare's life from the time she was 6 years old until she was an old lady.

Clare's life processes chronologically but Henry's is chaotic and dips in and out of Clare's timeline. This fascinating book has to be read a least once to understand the complicated thread of a wonderful romance.

Ian Paget



Transcription by Kate Atkinson

In 1940 a rather naive 18yr old Juliet starts working for MI5 . The work transcribing recordings of minor Fascist spies is both boring and tedious, not even the murder of two women, one who is mistaken for Juliet and the second a minor spy adds much excitement to her life, but is related very amusingly.

Post War Juliet is a producer at the BBC schools, again very low key and rather dull. Then things are not quite as they first seemed.

A good book well written, as are all her books and very amusing.

Karyn Wynne Evans