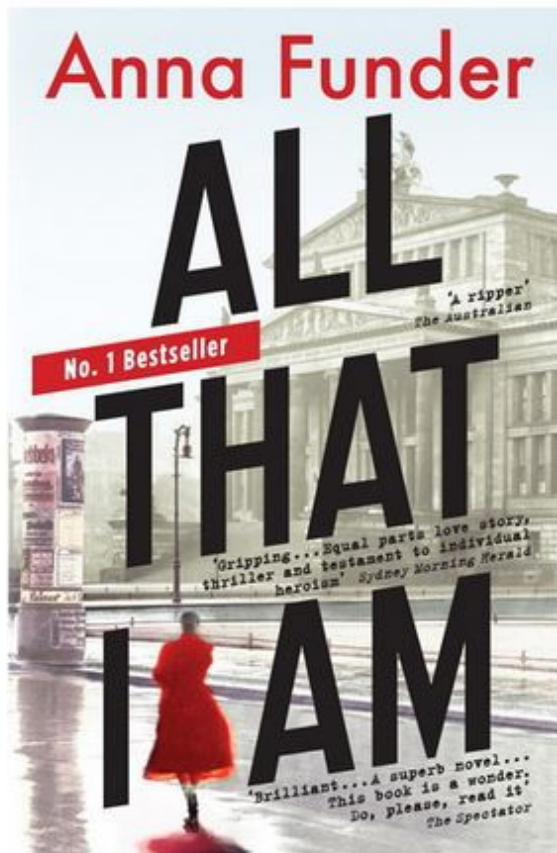


June 2021



*All That I Am* was the winner of the 2012 Miles Franklin and author Anna Funder's first novel. This is an excerpt from Bronwyn Lee's review published just before the award was announced.

The narrative centres on a coterie of German dissidents – cousins, Ruth Becker and Dora Fabian, and their respective lovers, Hans Wesemann and Ernst Toller – whose political agitating against Hitler and his Third Reich necessitated their hasty departure from Germany and their subsequent resettlement in London as refugees.

The persecution the exiles suffer unfortunately doesn't stop at the Channel, and their story builds to a harrowing – and tragic – denouement.

Funder came to the story through her friendship

with Ruth Blatt, the novel's dedicatee whose extraordinary life inspired the character of Ruth Becker.

Ruth – the sole survivor of the group – spent five years in solitary confinement in a German prison before securing her passage to Australia (via Shanghai) in 1947. She lived the next fifty years of her life alone in a flat in Bondi Junction.

Funder has said, "In conversation, Ruth would move from criticizing Hitler to criticizing our own government at the time, in a way that made it clear that when you are living through something, there are some people who can see things for what they are (whether that's dire, or just moderately unpalatable), and will always speak out. It is this kind of courage that

or just moderately unpalatable), and will always speak out. It is this kind of courage that fascinated me, along with the moral compass that underlies it.”

*All That I Am* is a novel that questions the ubiquity of the human conscience, yet it insists on its cultivation. We ignore our conscience – or allow its distortion – at our peril. History shows that the consequences can be mighty.

As W.H. Auden (who makes a cameo appearance in Funder’s novel) writes in his poem, “In Memory of Ernst Toller”:

We are lived by powers we pretend to understand:

They arrange our lives; it is they who direct us at the end

The enemy bullet, the sickness, or even our own hand.

It’s true *All That I Am* is a dark novel, but as history and a warning there aren’t many more important.

Average score for those who attended on the night was: 3

Our next meeting will be at Preece House on 12/07/21 at 6:30PM to discuss *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* by Christy Lefteri

Hope to see you all there and happy reading!

# Other Books We Read

June 2021

Klara and the Sun by Kazuo Ishiguro, 4 and 3.5

American Firt by Jeanine Cummins, 3.5

Sex Lies and Question Time by Kate Ellis, 3.5

The Bass Rock by Evie Wyld, 3.5

Toxic by Richard Flanagan, 3.5

The Nest by Cynthia D'Aprix Sweeney, 3.5

The Details by Tegan Bennett Daylight, 3

Mrs Dalloway by Virginia Woolf, 4.5

Double Blind by Edward St Aubyn, 2.5

Girl, Woman, Other by Bernadine Evaristo, 4

Joe Cinque's Consolation by Helen Garner, 3.5

The Round House by Louise Erdrich, 3.5

The friend by Sigrid Nunez, 4

Coda by Thea Astley 4.5

Everyman's Guide to Scientific living by Carrie Tiffany, 3

The slow natives by Thea Astley, 3

Locations by Jan Morris, 2.5

The peppered moth by Margaret Drabble, 3.5

The nest by Cynthia D'Aprix Sweeney, 2.5

The dictionary of list words by Pip Williams, 2.5

My Year of Living Vulnerably by Rick Morton, 3.5

Damascus by Christos Tzolikas, 4

Stasiland by Anna Funder, 4

Anna Karenina by Leo Tolstoy, 3

The Believer: Encounters with Love, Death & Faith by Sarah Krasnostein, 3.5

How to be Animal by Melanie Challenger, 3.5

We Are All Birds of Uganda by Hatsa Zayyan, 4

Tell Me Why by Archie Roach, 4