

# Stories of struggle ring true for Anna

**NOT PARADISE: Four Women's Journeys Beyond Survival, by Anna Rosner Blay.** Hybrid Publishers, rrp \$27.95.

**A**nna Rosner Blay is the daughter of Holocaust survivors. She was born in Paris and now lives in Melbourne. Her parents were rescued from the Holocaust by Oscar Schindler.

Blay's new book, *Not Paradise: Four Women's Journeys Beyond Survival*, is her second. Her first, *Sister, Sister*, was shortlisted for *The Age Book of the Year* and the NSW Premier's Awards.

The central focus of *Not Paradise* is how four women rise above the horrors of the Holocaust and rebuild their lives in Australia.

The book becomes a personal journey for Blay as the women's stories reflect something of her own journey as she struggles through the pain of a marriage break-up.

Blay is quietly spoken and reflective. She says that, as a child of Holocaust parents, she needed to clarify some matters in her own mind.

"I needed to speak to the four women about my upbringing and my set of beliefs," she says.

"With some survivors of the Holocaust, there is, after so much suffering, almost a sense that you don't have a right to exist.

"I had a sense that this was somehow impacting on me."



**Strength:** Anna Rosner Blay says the Holocaust defined her personality.

Blay says she was surprised that her own experiences became somehow intertwined with those of the four women.

"With my marriage break-up, there was a sense of loss," she says.

"I felt that nothing I could go through would compare to the suffering experienced by the women I interviewed.

"I found I could share their suffering.

"I think Holocaust survivors have an inherited sense of loss and there is a sense of empathising with the trauma of others."

The stories of Erna Rostenthal,



Kitia Altman, Jasia Romer and Basia Schenkel reveal these women's strength as they struggle to overcome the past.

Blay says that even though she was born after it, the Holocaust provides a defining awareness of herself as a person.

"I wish it wasn't that way," she says.

"I don't want the Holocaust to describe me. Still, I am Jewish and the Holocaust defines a lot of the way I see myself."

— Christopher Bantick

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