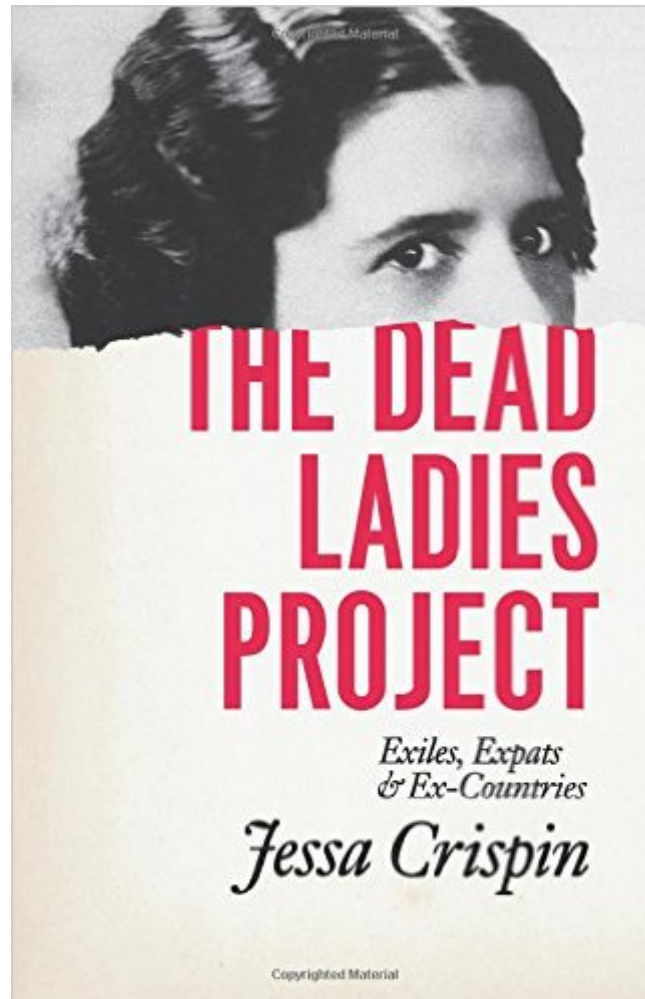


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# The Dead Ladies Project: Exiles, Expats, And Ex-Countries



## Synopsis

When Jessa Crispin was thirty, she burned her settled Chicago life to the ground and took off for Berlin with a pair of suitcases and no plan beyond leaving. Half a decade later, she's still on the road, in search not so much of a home as of understanding, a way of being in the world that demands neither constant struggle nor complete surrender. *The Dead Ladies Project* is an account of that journey—but it's also much, much more. Fascinated by exile, Crispin travels an itinerary of key locations in its literary map, of places that have drawn writers who needed to break free from their origins and start afresh. As she reflects on William James struggling through despair in Berlin, Nora Barnacle dependant on and dependable for James Joyce in Trieste, Maud Gonne fomenting revolution and fostering myth in Dublin, or Igor Stravinsky starting over from nothing in Switzerland, Crispin interweaves biography, incisive literary analysis, and personal experience into a rich meditation on the complicated interactions of place, personality, and society that can make escape and reinvention such an attractive, even intoxicating proposition. Personal and profane, funny and fervent, *The Dead Ladies Project* ranges from the nineteenth century to the present, from historical figures to brand-new hangovers, in search, ultimately, of an answer to a bedrock question: How does a person decide how to live their life?

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I really enjoyed this book because it has a lot of stuff in there that I like to read. I love reading about other people's traveling escapades while sitting comfortably in my house, on my couch, with my dogs. I like when I can feel a kinship with anyone who has also not chosen the predictable and

expected life and feels like an outcast among married friends with children living in suburbia. Crispin seems very interesting, neurotic, and I like how much she swears. I love books, I love reading and have been a fan of Bookslut and Spolia for a longtime. Crispin has introduced me to books that aren't on every other bookish website and artists I didn't know or knew little about and she does the same with The Dead Ladies Project. It is the very opposite of Eat, Pray, Love. This is part memoir, part travel with history, and gossip about the lives and loves of dead artists. I am familiar with William James and Somerset Maugham (not all the dead ladies are ladies) but I didn't know anything about their private lives and how that played into their work. I had never heard of Claude Cahun, a lesbian artist living on Jersey Island during the Nazi occupation of WWII with her lover/step-sister and how they bravely peppered the German soldiers with propaganda pamphlets. She sounds fascinating and now I am sad that there is no biography written of her. I liked that Crispin went to Berlin, St. Petersburg, Galway, and Sarajevo and not Rome, Paris, and the Tuscan countryside. She didn't talk about Picasso or Sylvia Plath but Rebecca West and Margaret Anderson and Maude Gonne. She didn't talk of James Joyce but of his wife, Nora Barnacle. I read this slowly, not wanting it to end but since Crispin also leaves a nice reading list at the end, I now have several books I want to read just from reading this book. That is another thing to like about The Dead Ladies Project, it left me wanting to know more.

I really enjoyed The Dead Ladies Project! It combines elements of memoir, biography and travelogue, but is not really any of these things: it manages to be completely sui generis. Imagine your craziest, most darkly brilliant and unpretentiously erudite friend sitting with you down over a bottle of something strong and telling you about her time traveling around Europe in search of the ghosts of famous writers and other notables. Except she keeps digressing to tell you about her unhappy love affair with a married man... except she doesn't give you quite enough information to know just how you ought to think about this... That's what The Dead Ladies Project is like. It's unique; it's genius. One caveat: the more you know about the people she writes about, the more you will get out of it.

Jessa Crispin ran the bookslut literary blog for several years before she abandoned Chicago and relocated in Berlin. This book relates her travels around Europe to places where several authors or authors' muses lived (William Blake, James Joyce's wife, Maud Gonne, etc.). Jessa evaluates these locations impartially and insight-fully. She's bright and honest. I enjoyed traveling vicariously with her.

lots of good things including: a joke about cancers (the astrological sign) and how they approach situations (please read the book to find out the punchline), a scary story about a fairy, atheists are the new materialists and why they are boring, an interesting island, the word "lover," and a lot more. I'm buying one for my sister too, peace

What a wonderful collection of vignettes on very interesting and mostly inspiring women many of whom have remained in the shadows. Thank you Jessa Crispin for telling your story so wonderfully interwoven with these places and people. I'm pretty sure we should have been best friends.

I am amazed that so few people have reviewed this book. It is wonderful. Crispin is a gifted and entertaining writer, even when writing about depressing topics like suicidal thoughts. Love the travelogue aspect, love the philosophical aspect, love the discussion of writers I've never read and whom I will turn to next.

I found this book pretty annoying most of the way through. It redeemed itself in the last two chapters. The chapters on how books saved her when she was a teenager and gave her imagination a path to see a way out of her small town life. The author was one unhappy, depressed woman. The premise of traveling around the world to find herself was a good one. The cloud she lived under never seemed to lift, though, no matter what she did or whom she researched. I decided she had quite a bit of courage to go and do what she did given her depressed mindset. She did not commit suicide as she had contemplated in her teenage years. She did find a way to make her way in the world. This was no "Eat, Pray, Love". I understand her. I feel for her. I found her exhausting.

I was inspired to get this book upon hearing the author interviewed on the Stuff Mom Never Told You podcast. The book resonated with my own inner changeling of wire monkey parentage. I also have searched for my home and sovereignty in a pact with the Flying Dutchman. I agree that life is to be treasured because of its often dark limitations, for only then we get to color outside the lines. I wish that Ms. Crispin continues to take care of good care of herself and her brain cells so she can continue to supply me with many more Gems of insight that will illuminate the way as I stumble forward. It is rare to I get to read something so beautifully written so deeply thought through and inspirational. I was happy to read about Maud Gonne, as little seems written about her. I am looking forward to reading Ms. Crispin's new book on the Tarot.

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