

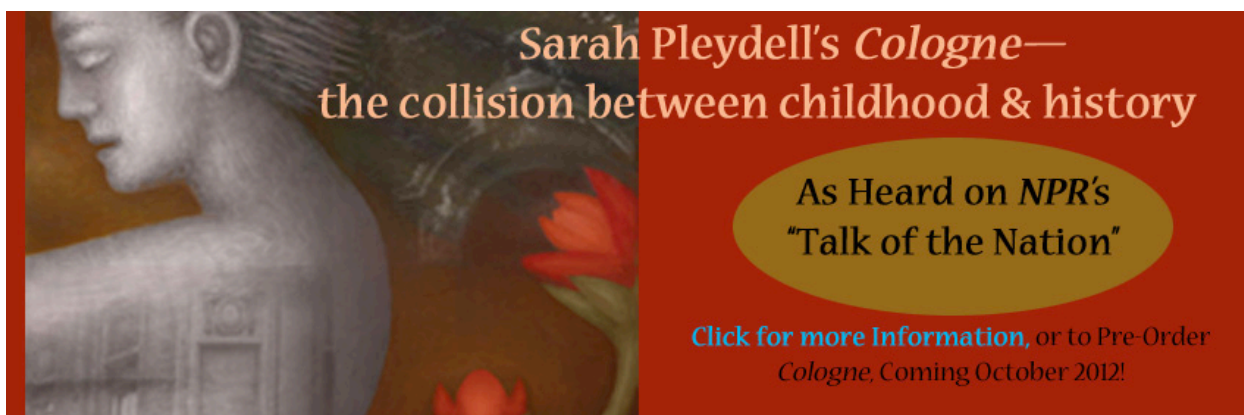


**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**COLOGNE**  
**By Sarah Pleydell**

London, 1960: Renate von Hasselmann, a nineteen-year-old German *au pair*, arrives at Victoria Station prepared to meet her new charges, Caroline and Maggie Whitaker. Yet she is ill-prepared for their parents: the mother, Helen, knows more about Nazi Germany than Renate does, and the father, Jack, disarms Renate with his quicksilver charm. In Sarah Pleydell's debut novel *Cologne* (FUZE Publishing; December, 2012; \$14.95 trade paperback), childhood and history collide, blurring the distinctions between victim and victor, ruin and redemption. With delicate humor, Pleydell presents a portrait of a family on the cusp of great social change, while reminding us that the traumas of war revisit the children of the peace.





**Selected Excerpt:**

*Into this delicate peace will barge Renate. She will smell of incense and Christmas trees, dark sweet chocolate cooking on a stove, Renate who should have known better, who should have heeded their warnings.*

*At the end of this day, Renate will settle the children to sleep for the very first time, and they will sit up, suddenly, the two of them, wide-awake and delighted with their defiance. And they will sing to her their dead men and daisies song: “When will they e-ve-rr learn, when will they e-ver-r learn?”*

*“It’s the hymn,” the older one will inform her, “for all the women who lost their sweethearts to the First World War, for the ones who never even met the men they would otherwise have married. It’s horribly sad, isn’t it, Renate, never even to meet your husband?”*

*Though it won’t be Renate’s husband they will be warning her about.*

**Selected Advance Praise:**

In *Cologne*, Sarah Pleydell has succeeded in animating her harrowing subject of a family's destruction with the most vivid, delicate, perfect details. This is a wise and subtle novel, masterfully written, as provocative as it is riveting.

--Joanna Scott, MacArthur Fellow, Pulitzer Prize Finalist, author of *Follow Me*

This is a crisply and elegantly written short book, with memorable characters, that takes on big personal and historical themes. Set in the early 1960s in a still-exhausted post-war Britain, it tells the story of a troubled English family whose lives are altered by the arrival of a German au pair. The stoic solidity of the mother, the breezy, handsome charm of the father and the precocious curiosity of the girls are no match for this interloper and the history she represents. Indeed, the book, with wit and insight, shows that the values that served Britain so well during the war masked a lingering despair and sadness that couldn’t keep up with a modernizing, changing Europe.

--Patrick B. Pexton, *The Washington Post*

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***Cologne*** is a beautifully written, lyrical novel evocative of Virginia Woolf's finest work. At its center are the Whittaker sisters, as deeply tied to each other by love as by hate-- Maggie still a child, Caroline on the brink of adolescence--both struggling to maintain the delicate balance between innocence and the precocious knowledge with which they are burdened. Theirs is a world not easily forgotten—it so mirrors the larger one in which most women still live.

--Evelyn Torton Beck, Professor Emerita, Women's Studies and Comparative Literature, University of Maryland, author of *Franz Kafka, Frida Kahlo and the Healing Power of Art*

In ***Cologne*** Sarah Pleydell deftly manages to evoke the pain and confusion of childhood sexual abuse and its corollary, extreme family dysfunction, in elegant, finely wrought prose. This is a brave and haunting story that could not be more timely.

--Barbara Graham, author of New York Times best-seller, *Eye of My Heart*

In her luminous novel, ***Cologne***, Sarah Pleydell explores the ways in which a young girl's private sorrows and redemptions mirror the great historical forces of war and its aftermath. Coming of age just after World War II, Caroline Whitaker's family fragments, betrayals threaten to overwhelm her, and her very life depends on the courage she can summon in the ruins of her innocence. ***Cologne*** is subtle, evocative, and deeply moving, a book that has changed me as only the finest literature can, and must.

--Joyce Reiser Kornblatt, author, *The Reason for Wings, White Water, Breaking Bread*

***Cologne***: Fiction, Fuze Publishing (December, 2012),  
\$14.95, 256 pages; ISBN: 978-0-9849908-4-9

Sarah Pleydell is available for questions and interviews.

