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AFTER ALL

A Gathering Storm of Romance, Revenge, and Espionage in Postwar South America

Robert Arthur Neff

Old Stone Press (328 pp.)

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BOOK REVIEW

A sequel continues the story of two German Jewish musicians—one a Holocaust survivor, the other the daughter of a Nazi—living in postwar Brazil.

Brazil, 1945. Nazi Germany has just been defeated, which comes as great news to Dieter Meister, a survivor and recent escapee of the Theresienstadt concentration camp. He now plays piano in the long bar of the Copacabana Palace Hotel in Rio de Janeiro, accompanying (and living with) the celebrated chanteuse Sofie von Seigler. Dieter and Sofie knew each other in Berlin before World War II, though they were separated by his internment. Like Dieter, Sofie is the child of a Jewish mother, but her father, a Wehrmacht general, was able to help her survive the war in Prague. Now Dieter and Sofie live in Rio with fake Swiss passports identifying them as the Havliks. Sofie's father, Otto von Seigler, is also in Brazil, hiding in the country's interior from those who would bring him to justice for his wartime activities. Dieter and Sofie are ready to have the life they've dreamed of—they've recently caught the attention of renowned American bandleader Booker "Buca" Pittman—but the legacies of the war continue to haunt them. A new American intelligence service intent on proving itself begins the search for Otto, dragging Dieter and Sofie back into the past. Neff's (*Über Alles*, 2016) prose sparkles with period details and movie-worthy dialogue: "If you Americans are truly interested in visiting justice upon the thieves, torturers, and murderers who have ravaged Europe for a decade," says Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal, one of the novel's many cameos, "these files will help identify many who should not be allowed to slip away unpunished." The author has done his research, though he is perhaps overly eager to prove it, inserting expository digressions that often read like history rather than historical fiction. Fans of the first book [*Über Alles*, 2016], or those interested in the fragile geopolitics following the war, will enjoy this sequel, even if the strings Neff uses to animate his characters are often visible.

A mostly engaging, if imperfect, historical novel about a couple dealing with the aftermath of war.

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