



Party in the Blitz: The English Years

Elias Canetti

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A stunning and unexpected new volume of Elias Canetti's autobiography. A surprise gift to celebrate the Nobel Laureate's 100th birthday.

Nobel Prize winner Elias Canetti, at 85, beset by the desire to come to terms with his years of exile in Britain, wrote *Party in the Blitz*. He waited half a century to confront these memories, perhaps because "in order to be truthful, I should have to track down every needless humiliation I was offered in England, and relive it as the torture it was." *Party in the Blitz* dissects that torture with unrestrained acerbity, recounting the ordeal of being in a new country where not a soul knew his writing. But not one to be ignored, "the godmonster of Hempstead" (as John Bayley dubbed Canetti) soon knew everyone and everyone knew him. Enoch Powell, Bertrand Russell, Iris Murdoch, Empson, Wittgenstein, Kokoshka, Kathleen Raine, Henry Moore, Ralph Vaughn Williams: Canetti knew them all, and in *Party in the Blitz* he mercilessly rakes some of them over the coals. He detested T.S. Eliot and came to bitterly despise Iris Murdoch, with whom he had an affair: Every word of his devastating portrait of her quivers with rage. "He must have been a frequent party-goer," as Jeremy Adler remarks in his excellent afterword, "to judge by the well-informed distaste with which he recalls them." Gorgeously translated by Michael Hofmann, *Party in the Blitz* lives up to Canetti's injunction that "when you write down your life, every page should contain something no one has ever heard about."

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