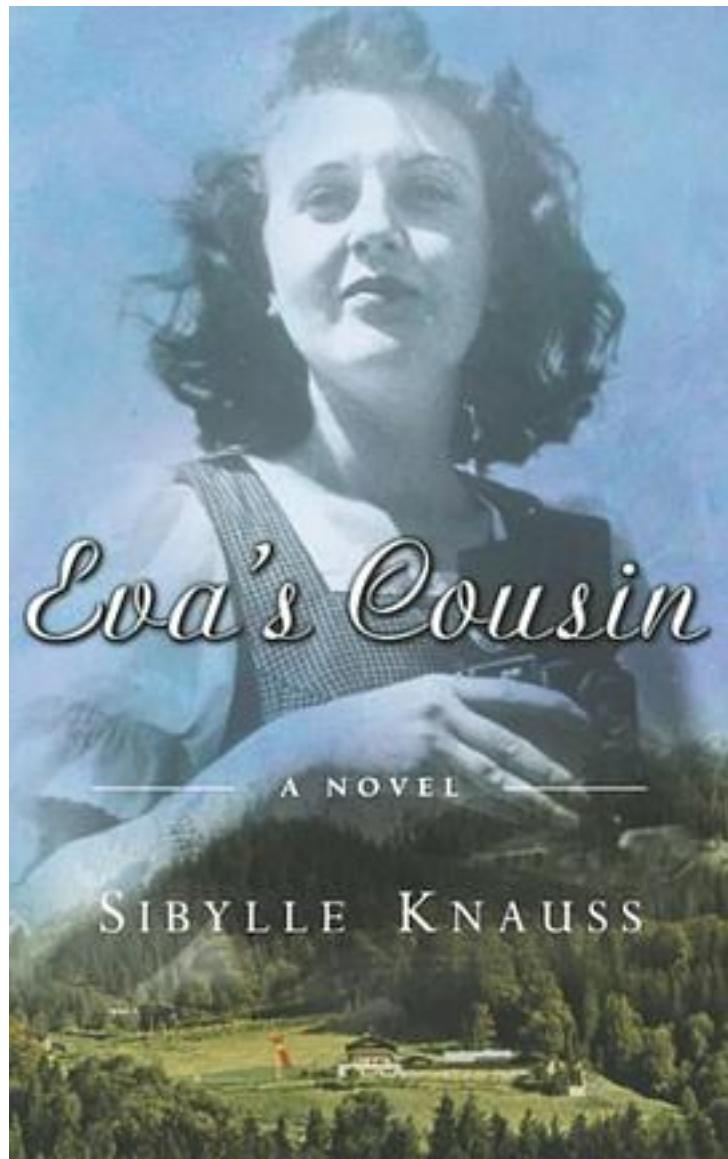


# Eva's Cousin



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著者:Knauss, Sibylle

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Amazon.com Eva Braun's cousin, Gertrude Weisker, was 20 years old when she played companion to Braun at the Berghof, Hitler's Bavarian aerie. Weisker kept silent about her time as a Nazi houseguest until she finally told all to German novelist Sibylle Knauss. Now Knauss has transformed Weisker's memories into the novel *Eva's Cousin*. While the novel's protagonist, Marlene, is a fictionalized version of Weisker, the rest of the infamous cast travel under their real names: Braun, Hitler, Goering, Speer. It's an odd and sometimes confusing project. As Marlene accompanies Eva through the final days of World War II--the days leading up to Braun's and Hitler's double suicide--we're never quite sure if we're witness to Weisker's memories or Knauss's invention. At its best, though, the book makes a compelling investigation into the mundanity of evil. Hitler is pathologized, but never diminished, as Marlene and Eva and all the rest tiptoe around him, careful not to upset him: "Nothing takes more courage than to disappoint a despot. Should he ever discover that free human beings with free will exist, it would surely be the death of him." Knauss cleverly counters Marlene's postadolescent musings with the mythically terrible world she inhabits: "I feel so lonely in Hitler's teahouse," she tells us. And "The only person who did understand me was Albert Speer." These juxtapositions indict Marlene for her very innocence, and make *Eva's Cousin* a powerful document of witness. --Claire Dederer From Publishers Weekly In the sweltering summer of 1944, Germany's citizens were trapped between the Allied bombing raids and the fear-driven virulence of Hitler's faltering government. But for 20-year-old Marlene, invited by her cousin, Eva Braun, to stay at Hitler's mountain retreat in Berchtesgaden, the summer was one of sexual and social awakening. Marlene is initially blinded by the unaccustomed luxury, but she turns out to be both sensible and sensitive. While she has an affair with an SS officer, she also hides a young Russian boy who has escaped the work camps. Based on interviews with Braun's real cousin, the novel is a sympathetic portrait of an innocent girl who, while she seems ensconced in the heart of the Nazi empire, is actually a resistance force of one. An older, disenchanted Marlene looks back on these events and says that the entire country was steeped in guilt and shame: "We remember gray-faced people whom we saw passing by, and we remember that we saw them in the knowledge that they were lost." When Knauss implies that Marlene's experience can explain mass support for the Nazi regime, the moral center of the book falters, but her sparely poetic and intense portrait of a young girl caught between her own ethical code and the promise of power is unrelentingly powerful. A bestseller in Germany, the narrative is adeptly translated by prize-winning Anthea Bell, who has also rendered W.G. Sebald's works into English; it may well make Knauss's international reputation. Readers must judge for themselves whether the protagonist's description of her family as outspoken anti-Nazis is revisionist history, but her memories of Hitler and his entourage are bound to excite interest. real-life protagonist of this novel, Gertraud Weisker, waited until after his death to tell her story to veteran German novelist Knauss. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. See all Editorial Reviews

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