

coming out of Blaine's hat are the second rate ones about number squares and card tricks.

Blaine traces his discovery of the great masters, from Robert-Houdin, to his namesake, Houdini, and describes his own progress from street magician to international phenomenon. He is so serious about himself you almost hear the egg-throws warming up – when he emerges from his ice-block, he claims the stunt had magically united all races and social classes, and a seven-day burial was originally scheduled for Good Friday, presumably to steal Jesus' th

Blaine maintains that the magic of his later feats goes no farther than a heavy dose of laxative before the stunt begins, but as he claims elsewhere in the book, magicians are actors faking supernatural powers. A subtle confession relating to sightings of a Blaine look-alike lurking near the Thames, perhaps?

**Jane Alexander**

★★★

www.davidblaine.com

## NINETEEN SEVENTY-NINE: A BIG YEAR IN A SMALL TOWN

**Rhona Cameron**

EBURY PRESS

Rhona Cameron bares her soul (and breasts) in this frank and often disturbing autobiography. Set in the hayfields, school grounds and railway bridges of Musselburgh, it is a candid account of a 13-year-old's struggle to find her identity in small town Scotland. Normal teenage angst is amplified in Cameron, as she obsessively stalks female teachers and schoolgirls, whilst trying to come to terms with her sexuality. This confusion is exemplified in her frequent desire to be a boy, her hatred of the "blonde bitches" who reject her advances, and her submission, sexually, to local lads in order to be accepted.

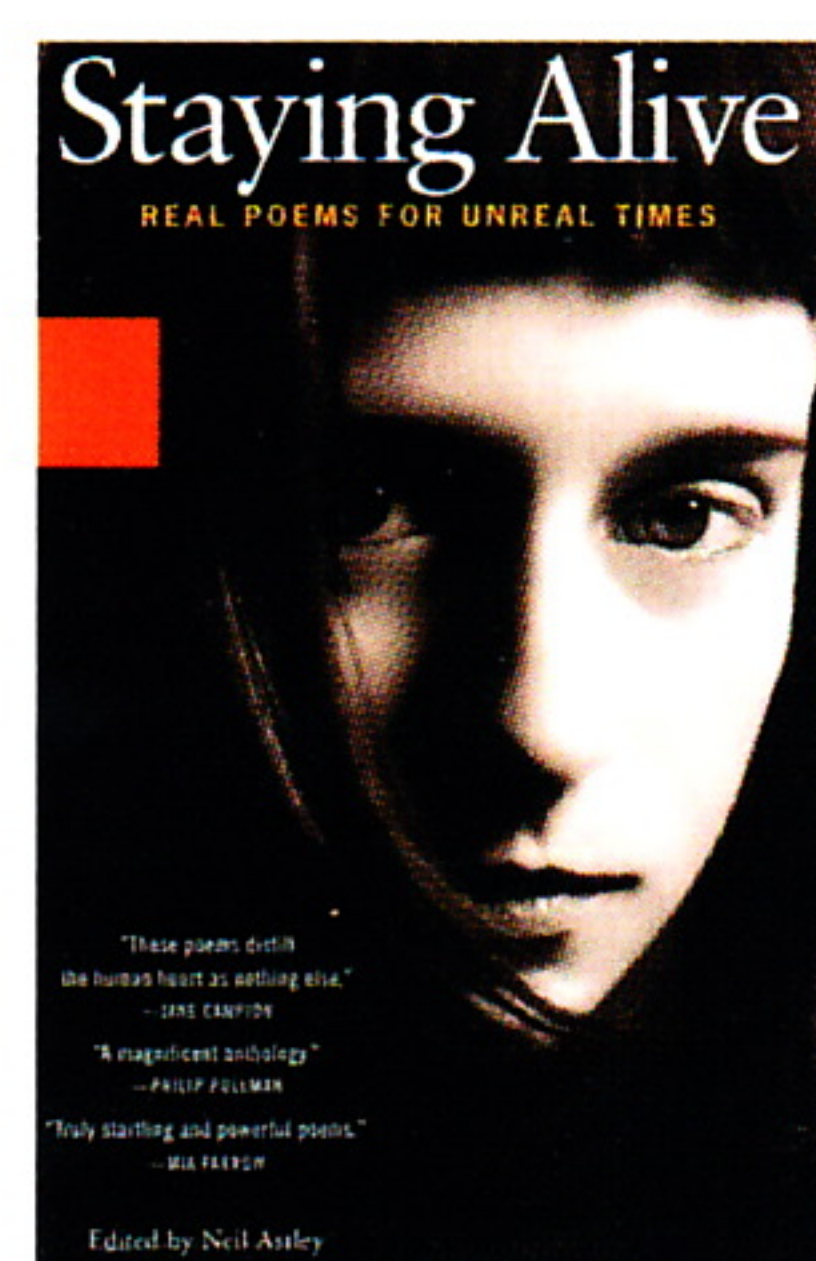
Cameron's portrayal of an infatuated and self-loathing adolescent is well realised, as is the relationship with her parents and

peers. However, Cameron's claims in her prologue that 1979 was "a pivotal year" in her life, may leave readers who expect big revelations somewhat disappointed.

**Ana Ruddick**

★★

www.randomhouse.co.uk



## STAYING ALIVE

**Janet Reibstein**

BLOOMSBURY

Staying Alive by Janet Reibstein is a vividly told family memoir that spans three generations from New Jersey 1920 to Devon 2001.

Tracking the history of her afflicted female relatives, Reibstein illuminates the emotional and physical stages of breast cancer. By offering the story of real people, Reibstein is able to give the reader an up close and often uncomfortable feel for what it must be like to suffer from this rapacious disease. The story is most effective in its multiple perspectives – the reader is given the dying women's thoughts as well as hearing the story from the witnessing loved ones. Reibstein's training in psychology gives the memoir potent insight into family life and relationship dynamics. Her own personal battle with the illness is a testament to courage and foresight. As a meditation on dying and living, Staying Alive is poignant and deeply informative – an emotional guidebook for coping with breast cancer.

**Sophie Watson**

★★★

www.bloomsbury.com

## WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

**Cilla Black**

EBURY PRESS

To anyone under forty, Cilla Black is a catchphrase-laden TV presenter, best known for hosting

## UNTIL THE FINAL HOUR: HITLER'S LAST SECRETARY



## UNTIL THE FINAL HOUR: HITLER'S LAST SECRETARY

**Traudl Junge with Melissa Muller**

WEIDENFELD & NICOLSON

Traudl Junge was 22 when she began as Hitler's secretary in 1942, flitting between hideouts and headquarters before sharing his last days in the Berlin bunker. Junge lived, worked, dined and conversed with the Fuhrer until 20 April 1945, when he put a pistol in his mouth and simultaneously bit onto a cyanide capsule. She typed his will and describes hearing the final shot, seeing the blood and smelling the petrol that was used to douse his body before it was burnt in a bomb crater, only feet from the bunker door.

Frank and gripping, the book shows another side to the megalomaniacal murderer: paternal, charming, intelligent, witty and even honest – he refused to let Eva Braun cut up a tartan rug in his Bavarian retreat to make his lover a coat: "It's not mine to dispose of," he insisted. Although smitten by her boss's charisma, impressed at being around the Third Reich's most infamous characters and largely screened from reality, Junge harboured serious doubts about Nazism and was beset by feelings of complicity until her death in 2002.

A fascinating fly-on-the-wall glimpse at history's most infamous despot, that watches him descend in two and a half years from ultimate power to a feeble, beaten old man.

**Neville Marten**

★★★

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