

Eve and Her Own - Alsace, Cévennes, Nîmes - The Paths to Freedom, Éditions Ampelos, 176 pages, 2025

For this book, I received the **Women's Biography Award** (*Prix de Biographies de Femmes*) presented by the French Association of University Women (*Association Française des Femmes diplômées des Universités* – AFFDU) and the University Women of Europe (UWE).

Abstract

Ève, a twenty-year-old Jewish woman from eastern France, went into hiding in southern France with her family in 1940, eventually finding refuge in a village in the Cévennes to escape persecution. Thanks to the hospitality and silence of the local population, as well as prudence and good fortune, she and her family survived.

This biographical account deciphers the process of women's emancipation in the post-war era. Ève comes from a bourgeois background, is fatherless, married, and a mother of three. How will she organize her life and break free from her family's control ? What resources does she have to turn the page on those war years and choose a life matching her aspirations?

She possesses many talents, but no professional training.

As a first step, she needs recognition—to be seen as a woman before being a mother and a wife. In the 1950s and 60s, were there viable pathways to achieve this?

Gradually, Ève becomes aware of the inner contradictions that consume her. Her desire is to escape the narrow world around her, discover a new universe, and choose her own partner. She faces the misunderstanding of those close to her and confronts new obstacles: gaining acceptance in a new world with beliefs and customs different from her own.

A true challenge! Will Ève manage to overcome these difficulties and detach herself from her old world?

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Refugees in Nîmes in October 1940, Ève (20) and her husband Max, young Lorraine Jews, must hide in Vialas, a Protestant village in the Cévennes. They survive thanks to the hospitality and the silence of the local people, caution, and luck.

Following the Liberation, settled in Nîmes and ruined by the exodus, they begin a new chapter of their lives at a time when women are discovering independence and freedom.

Written from her daughter's perspective, this biographical account bears witness to a woman's emancipation in the 1950s and 60s—torn between her upbringing as a young bourgeois Jewish woman, her status as a mother of modest means, and her aspirations for a freer life. She faces the incomprehension of her loved ones and the struggle to be accepted into the bourgeois world of her lover, a Protestant from the Camargue.

Ève's life perfectly illustrates the challenge of freedom for many women in the 1950s and 60s, whose nascent feminism sought to break through family and social constraints.