

★ **A Line You Have Traced**

Roisin Dunnett

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Across more than a century, three women connected by a narrative persist beyond the brokenness of their worlds in *A Line You Have Traced*, Roisin Dunnett's stunning speculative novel.

At the end of World War I, brilliant Bea assists her husband in building their London business—until a rapacious writer invades her married life. Generations later, Kay, a gig-and-gallery worker, frequents queer clubs with her glorious friends, pores over perhaps the last remaining copy of a novel about her great-grandfather, and falls for a science fiction-writing activist, O, who is piqued by her stories of time travelers. And in postapocalyptic London, Ess, a Network acolyte, connects to these past stories by chance.

The three timelines are joined, in part, by themes of upheaval. All living through troubled times, the women resist: Bea, fascism and relegation to “proper” women’s roles; Kay, the persecution of immigrants—and fears of her own irrelevance; and Ess the death keens of a world wherein the rich hoard resources and becoming a parent feels reckless. Bea scribbles revelations in a red notebook; reading them years later, Kay’s sense of reality grows thin. And Ess, archiver of the notebook and the novel, is pulled into a plot to shape past lives by scientists who believe that history is permeable, and that a person can travel through time if they have intimate access a “tiny piece of [its] thinness.”

Its prose urgent, elegant, and alarming, *A Line You Have Traced* is a startling speculative novel that muses through the implications of action and inaction in the face of injustice. Its science is inextricable from its concepts of how repeated narratives bind people together, reaching across eons to shape futures and obscure elements of the past. Indeed, its women find strength in the stories they share, carrying the novel through to its magnificent, desperate ending.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (March / April 2025)

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