



# A Family of Strangers

*Deborah Tall*

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## A Family of Strangers Deborah Tall

“Without self-absorption, Tall traces the self’s emergence in a place which she recognized from the start as her testing place.”—Seamus Heaney

“In the literature of place, Deborah Tall’s book stands out for its delicacy, range of learning, and refreshing frankness.”—Phillip Lopate

In her third book of nonfiction, Deborah Tall explores the genealogy of the missing. Haunted by her orphaned father’s abandonment by his extended family, his secretive, walled-off trauma and absent history, she sets off in pursuit of the family he claims not to have. From the dutiful happiness of Levittown in the 1950s to a stricken former *shtetl* in Ukraine, we follow Tall’s journey through evasions and lies. Reflecting on family secrecy, postwar American culture, and the urge for roots, Tall’s search uncovers not just a missing family but an understanding of the part family and history play in identity. *A Family of Strangers* is Tall’s life’s work, told in such exacting, elegant language that the suppressed past vividly asserts its place in the present.

**Deborah Tall** is the author of four books of poems, most recently *Summons*, published by Sarabande Books after Charles Simic chose it for the Kathryn A. Morton Poetry Prize. She has also published two previous two books of nonfiction, *The Island of the White Cow: Memories of an Irish Island* and *From Where We Stand: Recovering a Sense of Place*, and co-edited the anthology *The Poet's Notebook* with Stephen Kuusisto and David Weiss. Tall has taught writing and literature at Hobart and William Smith Colleges and edited its literary journal, *Seneca Review*, since 1982. She lives in Ithaca, New York, with her husband David Weiss and their two daughters.

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