

The Gazelle by Julian Grenfell.  
The Book Guild Ltd 2004. (Tel. order line 01825 723398).

This tense combination of love story and thriller is set against the backdrop of the infamous Hitler Olympics which took place in Berlin in 1936. Its main protagonists are a Jewish woman sprinter, Leah Wittmann and Tommy Osborn, a former Olympian and equerry to King Edward VIII.

Julian Grenfell, deputy speaker of the House of Lords, has produced a real page-turner of a book, whose characters both actual and fictional live for the reader and the twists and turns of whose lives engage to the very end.

Julian Grenfell has focussed on an aspect of the Nazi period that has not been extensively dealt with before, certainly not in fiction, and in so doing has created a further reminder of the psychosis of the Nazi regime, prepared as it was to sacrifice all in the name of its twisted racial theories. The cat and mouse game between Leah and Tommy and Heydrich and his minions never flags and the conclusion for which one wishes is never certain.

In an Olympic year this is a timely reminder of the political backdrop to every Games, as well as being an excellent summer read.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh