

The Dreyfus Affair: The Story of the Most Infamous Miscarriage of  
Justice in French History by Piers Paul Read.  
Bloomsbury, 2012.

The Dreyfus 'affair' is one of the causes célèbres of Jewish History, memorably described from that perspective by Michael Burns in his 1992 work *Dreyfus: A Family Affair, 1789-1945*.

Piers Paul Read, the eminent writer of both fiction and non-fiction works, has taken a broader approach to his subject than have others. He divides his book into three parts, *Before the Affair*; *Alfred Dreyfus*; *The Affair*, sandwiched between a Preface and an Epilogue. The appearance of Dreyfus himself, delayed to the second part, is due to Read's anchoring of the 'affair' in the modern history of France, particularly in the politics and culture of the Third Republic. This serves to add a broader and deeper perspective to the Dreyfus-specific narrative than would otherwise be the case, clarifying particularly the cack-handed way that the French Army's senior officers dealt with the affair and its aftermath.

Read does not minimize the extent of the catastrophe for the Dreyfus family that was inflicted upon them by the false charges and imprisonment, though he sheds a fresh light on this by revealing Dreyfus' tendency to philander, as well as the stiffness of his nature which prevented people from warming to him.

Alfred Dreyfus was definitely not the architect of his own misfortune, but a more open character, and a greater degree of charm, might have made it less easy for those who pursued him for the lowest of motives.

*The Dreyfus Affair* by Piers Paul Read is a welcome addition to the Dreyfus canon, shedding fresh light on some aspects of a well-rehearsed case, and reminding the reader of the damage not only inflicted on the Dreyfus family by his arraignment, but also on France itself.

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