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**The Fan Who Knew Too Much: Aretha Franklin, the Rise of the Soap Opera, Children of the Gospel Church, and Other Meditations.**

**Heilbut, Anthony (author).**

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[REVIEW](#). First published June 1, 2012 (*Booklist*).

Heilbut blends biography with criticism and anecdotes to create marvelously zesty, erotically frank, assumption-blasting essays. The son of German Jewish immigrants, Heilbut found his soul's music in black gospel, and he has been writing about that tradition since the 1970s. The author of a major book on Thomas Mann, Heilbut has also been an adventurous record producer, and his love for music shapes his keenly modulated prose. This vigorous collection begins with a throw-the-door-open look at the history of gay men and lesbians in gospel music and continues with an acutely musical and sympathetic profile of Aretha Franklin, a wry look at the blues, and an investigation into the male soprano voice. Heilbut also pays tribute to writer Joseph Roth and reflects on the oceanic influence of gifted European refugees on America. Finally, his history of soap operas as a "revolutionary" form of storytelling that "domesticated Freud" and his anatomy of fandom take us on a guided tour unlike any other through the spirals of the psyche and the mazes of social and cultural convention and dissent.— *Donna Seaman*

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