



Leavetaking

Peter Weiss , Christopher Levenson (Translation)

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"I was on my way to look for a life of my own."

A brilliant, brutally honest autobiographical novel, long out of print, from one of the great artistic polymaths of the 20th century.

This is a Sebaldian account of the narrator's attempt to break free of a repressive upper-middle-class upbringing and make his way as an artist and individual, written in a single incantatory paragraph.

Leavetaking is the story of an upper-middle-class childhood and adolescence in Berlin between the wars. In the course of the book, Weiss plumbs the depths of family life: there is the early death of his beloved sister Margit, the difficult relationship with his parents, the fantasies of adolescence and youth, all set in the midst of an increasing anti-Semitism, which forces the Weiss family to move again and again, a peripatetic existence that only intensifies the narrator's growing restlessness.

The young narrator is largely oblivious to world events and focused instead on becoming an artist, an ambition frustrated generally by his milieu and specifically by his mother, who, herself a former actress, destroys his paintings during one of the family's moves. In the end, he turns to an older mentor, Harry Haller, a fictionalized portrait of Hermann Hesse, who encouraged and supported Weiss, and with Haller's example before him, the narrator takes his first steps towards a truly independent life. Intensely lyrical, written with great imaginative power, *Leavetaking* is a vivid evocation of a world that has disappeared and of the narrator's developing consciousness.

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Leavetaking Details

Date : Published July 8th 2014 by Melville House (first published 1960)

ISBN : 9781612193311

Author : Peter Weiss , Christopher Levenson (Translation)

Format : Paperback 144 pages

Genre : European Literature, German Literature, Fiction, Cultural, Germany, Novels, Adult Fiction

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From Reader Review Leavetaking for online ebook

Ronald Wise says

A one-paragraph, semi-biographical novel which begins with the death of the narrator's father and continues as a free-form chronology of his life experiences. Though more structured than a flow-of-consciousness narration, the story is told as a sequence of observations, impressions, and emotions. The author's father was a Jew in Germany, and though there are not specific references to the rise of Nazism, one's historical knowledge must provide the setting in which many of the events take place. This book was added to my reading list after rereading Weiss's *Marat/Sade*.

Josh Cochran says

Great read. Picked this little book up on vacation, and it was the perfect beach read. Weiss's style is introspective and reminiscent of Dostoevsky. He even makes a reference to his influence in the novel. The narrator is a German adolescent between the 2 great wars. He of the age, place, and time that must be one of the most confusing ever, yet he remains inside his own head and totally oblivious to the world around him.

Zapatoo says

Mit dem formalen Abschied beginnend, begibt man sich auf die Suche nach dem Verhältnis zu den dereinst noch lebenden Eltern und den Schritten und Augenblicken, die der Entfremdung vorausgingen. Dabei ist die Erzählung so unzuverlässig, wie eine Erinnerung nur sein kann, die verschwimmt zwischen Erinnerung und Phantasie, die der ganzen Zeit mit dem Abschweifen in die Vergangenheit rechnen muss.
So wenn er nicht mehr davon träumt riesenhaft über seine Umwelt hinauszuwachsen, sondern mit seinen Schwestern Sex hat.

Susan says

A fine small book by Peter Weiss, better known as a playwright than a novelist. This book is a barely fictionalized account of a bright young man's life between the two world wars in Germany as he differentiates from his parents and sets out on his own. Beautifully written.

Electric says

Bericht einer Abnabelung, einer Menschwerdung als Künstler. Poetisch ohne Formalismus, selbstbezogen aber nicht unpolitisch. Empfehlung aus einer Leseliste von J. Winkler zum "Können und Nichtkönnen beim Schreiben". So liest es sich dann auch.

Justin Evans says

'Sebaldian,' one blurb puts it. That's ridiculous. This is actually really good.

Sara Gallardo says

Es una lectura intensa, porque Weiss es también bastante intenso. La estructura de un solo párrafo resulta a ratos desasosegante porque todos los sucesos parecen mezclarse y porque hay partes incómodas, desapacibles. Aunque pueda parecer una despedida, un ajuste de cuentas con sus padres como punto de partida para poder comenzar a existir como ser independiente, creo que uno de los sentidos fundamentales de este libro es la sexualidad de Weiss, directamente relacionada con el ambiente opresivo de su familia. Creo que él quería en última instancia aclarar eso, dejar por escrito sus contradicciones y desprenderse de sus faltas.

Que no te engañe su extensión: no leas este libro si no estás de acuerdo con leer buena literatura pero atragantarte con su contenido y parar más de una vez para coger aliento.

Alice says

Really got lost in this one, in a good way. It is written in one continuous paragraph, which makes for an interesting an disjointed narrative thread.
