

FICTION

A moving portrait of a woman in the Diaspora

Poppy Seed

JOSEPH PEARCE

Max and Gisèle Friedmann are forced to leave their hometown Breslau in Nazi Germany. Their journey takes them across the world. With every place they have to leave, Gisèle is forced to part with something that is precious to her.

A convincing novel in every respect, a small masterpiece.

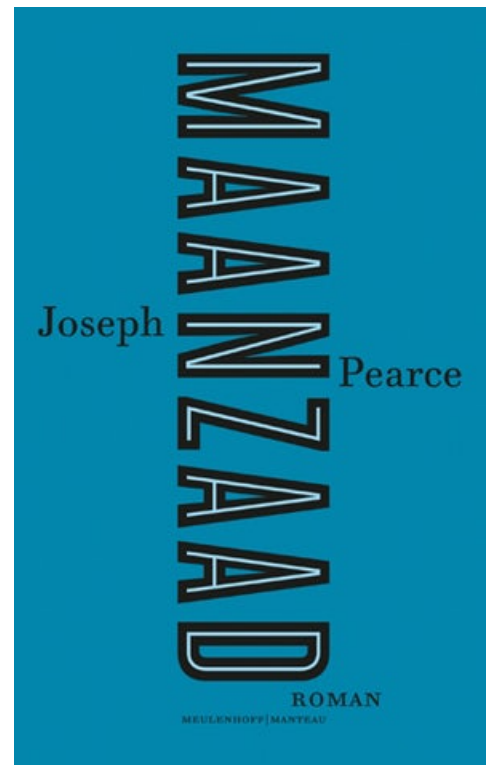
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First she has to say goodbye to her hometown, her roots. While war still seems far away, all sorts of seemingly innocent things point towards the coming catastrophe. Gisèle and Max decide to join their son Wolfgang in London. He, however, has no desire at all to move to Israel with them. This is a heavy blow for the couple, who eventually decide to move to Tel Aviv alone. There Gisèle has to learn how to live without her husband. Initially, she refuses to accept his death. She has always been good at ignoring truth and reality, but eventually they catch up with her. Her own death at the end of the novel is, paradoxically, both a victory and a defeat.

Gisèle remains a mystery throughout. Joseph Pearce shows everything she does, exposes her every thought. And yet... It gradually becomes clear that Gisèle makes things unnecessarily difficult for herself and for others. It makes her alternately irritating and engaging. But above all it makes her human.

Sober language, restraint, observational talent and the ability to tell a good story: Pearce has it all.

NRC HANDELSBLAD



AUTHOR



Joseph Pearce (b. 1951) was fourteen when his father revealed that they were not of British but of Jewish origin. His family history became a source of inspiration for his first novel, 'Land of Promise' (1999). In France the translation was selected as one of the 'ten best books of the moment'. Many of his other novels have a similar autobiographical slant, while his later works tackle themes such as teaching and the literary world in a comic or satirical way. *Photo © Koen Broos*

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