

In search of a hidden family past

Land of Promise

JOSEPH PEARCE

When Joseph Pearce was fourteen his father told him he was not an Englishman but from Germany and of Jewish origin. Twenty-five years later, Pearce decided to seek out his Jewish relatives, which turned out to be far from easy. The family had been scattered by the World War II and was now dispersed all over the world: aunts and cousins were living in England, the United States, Israel, Bolivia, Australia and South Africa. Some, like the author's father, had barely if ever spoken to their children about their terrible experiences.

A fine portrait gallery

LE MONDE

Only when Pearce visited them did they decide to talk. As well as the trauma of the Holocaust, another tragedy haunted the family: the mysterious suicide of grand-mother Else Durra. Based on old letters and on conversations with family members, Pearce reconstructs the growing despair of the exiles. For Else Durra, life had become pointless even before the war, ever since the death of her youngest son. With the story of his own odyssey, which takes him to blood relatives on four continents, Pearce makes the tragedy of the twentieth century painfully palpable.

Only one word comes to mind: a masterpiece

LE SOIR



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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