



Off Paradise: Stories (Western Literature Series)

Hart Wegner

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Martin, the central character of Hart Wegner's powerful short-story cycle, is a middle-aged German emigre who has found a home, of sorts, in the isolated and often surreal setting of contemporary Las Vegas. Exiled at the end of World War II with his parents from their beloved Silesia, the family struggles to come to terms with the turmoil of history and memory while they cope with the challenges of assimilation in an alien setting.

In stories that range from the Nevada desert to the lost world of prewar Silesia, Wegner explores, through the perspectives of Martin, his aging parents, and their small circle of fellow emigres, the intricate tapestry of the exile experience--childhood recollections of the vast and fertile plains of East Germany and the shelter of comfortable and loving homes, memories of the horrors of war, the guilt and terror and despair of displacement, the frustrations of finding one's way in a new and alien culture, the precious ties of family and longtime friendship. And most of all, loss--the loss of home; of an identity formed by an ancient language, the details of a shared culture, and a common sense of past and of future; of loved ones; and finally, and most tragically, of memory itself.

Wegner's characters are vividly and bravely human, bitter, tender, despairing, and full of hope. And ever-seeking a new home, a new place in which to belong after their long sojourn in the wilderness. The inner world of the exile has never been examined with such sympathy, such clarity, or such eloquence.

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