



The Aesthetics of Resistance, Volume 1: A Novel

By Peter Weiss

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The Aesthetics of Resistance, Volume 1: A Novel By Peter Weiss

A major literary event, the publication of this masterly translation makes one of the towering works of twentieth-century German literature available to English-speaking readers for the first time. The three-volume novel *The Aesthetics of Resistance* is the crowning achievement of Peter Weiss, the internationally renowned dramatist best known for his play *Marat/Sade*. The first volume, presented here, was initially published in Germany in 1975; the third and final volume appeared in 1981, just six months before Weiss's death.

Spanning the period from the late 1930s to World War II, this historical novel dramatizes anti-fascist resistance and the rise and fall of proletarian political parties in Europe. Living in Berlin in 1937, the unnamed narrator and his peers—sixteen- and seventeen-year-old working-class students—seek ways to express their hatred for the Nazi regime. They meet in museums and galleries, and in their discussions they explore the affinity between political resistance and art, the connection at the heart of Weiss's novel. Weiss suggests that meaning lies in embracing resistance, no matter how intense the oppression, and that we must look to art for new models of political action and social understanding. The novel includes extended meditations on paintings, sculpture, and literature. Moving from the Berlin underground to the front lines of the Spanish Civil War and on to other parts of Europe, the story teems with characters, almost all of whom are based on historical figures. *The Aesthetics of Resistance* is one of the truly great works of postwar German literature and an essential resource for understanding twentieth-century German history.

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Editorial Review

Review

“*The Aesthetics of Resistance* is centrally important to any kind of assessment of twentieth-century German history.”—James Rolleston, editor of *A Companion to the Works of Franz Kafka*

“[*The Aesthetics of Resistance*] . . . which [Peter Weiss] began when he was well over fifty, making a pilgrimage over the arid slopes of cultural and contemporary history in the company of *pavor nocturnus*, the terror of the night, and laden with a monstrous weight of ideological ballast, is a magnum opus which sees itself . . . not only as the expression of an ephemeral wish for redemption, but as an expression of the *will* to be on the side of the victims at the end of time.”—W. G. Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction*

“*The Aesthetics of Resistance* writes those who have been culturally and historically excluded back into the story of their time and demands—as modernism does—that we learn to read in a new way. . . . The monuments of modernism today rise like Ozymandias’ statue in the sand: *Ulysses*, Proust, Beckett, Pound’s *Cantos*, *The Making of Americans*, *The Waste Land*. At last, we have an English translation of a work that stands alongside them.”

(Robert Buckeye *Review of Contemporary Fiction*)

“[O]ne of the most significant works of postwar German literature. . . . The novel feels like an endless soliloquy on a bare stage, but one that takes the audience on the most amazingly imaginative time-and-space journey, with the narrative perspective cutting like a movie director’s camera from one intensely rendered visual detail to the next. . . . [E]xhilaratingly strange, compelling, and original. Readers who dare to enter this demanding verbal landscape will not come away empty-handed.”

(Mark M. Anderson *Bookforum*)

From the Back Cover

““The Aesthetics of Resistance” is centrally important to any kind of assessment of twentieth-century German history.”—James Rolleston, editor of “*A Companion to the Works of Franz Kafka*”

About the Author

Peter Weiss (1916–1982) was a German playwright, novelist, filmmaker, and painter. His works include the plays *Marat/Sade* and *The New Trial* (also published by Duke University Press) and the novels *The Shadow of the Body of the Coachman* and *The Conversation of the Three Walkers*. West Germany’s most important literary award, the Georg Büchner Prize, was awarded to Weiss posthumously in 1982.

Joachim Neugroschel has translated some two hundred books, including works by Franz Kafka, Marcel Proust, and Thomas Mann. He has won three pen translation awards and a French-American Foundation Translation Prize. He lives in Queens, New York.

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