



The Letters That Never Came (Jewish Latin America)

Mauricio Rosencof

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The Letters that Never Came is an autobiographical novel in three parts. Part I is a rich evocation of life in a working-class neighborhood in Montevideo, Uruguay, in the mid-1930s, as seen through the eyes of Moishe, the child of Polish-Jewish immigrants. In what is a daily routine, Moishe's father waits for the postman at the window, always hoping for news of his family from the Old Country. Don Isaac's relatives are prisoners of the Nazis, so all he can read Moishe and his mother is letters from before. Interspersed among the child narrator's reminiscences are the letters those relatives might have written, bearing witness to their suffering. Letters that never came.

In Part II, we find Moishe in the dungeons of the military junta that governed his country through the 1970s and part of the 1980s. Held in isolation, tortured and starving, he takes refuge in the world of his imagination, composing another letter that never came--a letter to his father that embodies his own quest for identity--while his parents, penniless, are evicted from their house and stigmatized as the mother and father of a "subversive."

Part III of Rosencof's text is largely a meditation on the redemptive power of the word, real and imagined. This poignant, humane work, as Uruguayan and Jewish as it is universal, links the cruelty of the Holocaust to that of the Uruguayan military and the resistance of Hitler's victims to his own.

The Letters that Never Came was originally published in Spanish in 2000 in Uruguay.

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