

The Disappointment Artist (Selected Unabridged Essays)



In a volume he describes as a series of covert and not-so-covert autobiographical pieces, Jonathan Lethem explores the nature of cultural obsession, in his case, with examples as diverse as western films, comic books, the music of Talking Heads and Pink Floyd, and the New York City subway. Along the way, he shows how each of these voyages out from himself have led him home, home to his fathers life as a painter, and to the source of his beginnings as a writer. The Disappointment Artist is a series of windows onto the collisions of art, landscape, and personal history that formed Lethems richly imaginative, searingly honest perspective on life as a human creature in the jungle of culture at the end of the 20th century. From a confession of the sadness of a Star Wars nerd to an investigation into the legacy of a would-be literary titan, Lethem illuminates the process by which a child invents himself as a writer, and as a human being, through a series of approaches to the culture around him. In The Disappointment Artist, a letter from his aunt, a childrens book author, spurs a meditation on the value of writing workshops and the uncomfortable fraternity of writers. In Defending The Searchers Lethem explains how a passion for the classic John Wayne Western became occasion for a series of minor humiliations. In Identifying with Your Parents, an excavation of childhood love for superhero comics expands to cover a whole range of nostalgia for a previous generations cultural artifacts. And 13/1977/21, which begins by recounting the summer he saw Star Wars 21 times, becomes a meditation on the sorrow and solace of the solitary movie-goer. The Disappointment Artist confirms Lethems unique ability to illuminate the way life, his and ours, can be read between the lines of art and culture. BONUS: This audio also includes an interview with the author.

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