



Burning Secret

Stefan Zweig , Anthea Bell (Translation)

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A suave baron takes a fancy to twelve-year-old Edgar's mother, while the three are holidaying in an Austrian mountain resort. His initial advances rejected, the baron befriends Edgar in order to get closer to the woman he desires. The initially unsuspecting child soon senses something is amiss, but has no idea of the burning secret that is driving the affair, and that will soon change his life for ever.

Burning Secret Details

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From Reader Review Burning Secret for online ebook

Zerrin says

Bir çocu?un olaylara bak?? aç?s? ancak bu kadar güzel anlatabilirdi. Zweig'e ?u kö?ede mi hayran oluyoruz? ?

Jasmine says

3.5 Stars

Man attestiert Stefan Zweig psychologischen Scharfsinn und einiges davon kann man in der 1911 erschienenen Erzählung "Brennendes Geheimnis" bereits erkennen. Sein Porträt des einsamen, emotional höchst instabilen zwölfjährigen Edgar überzeugt im ersten Teil der Geschichte. Edgar verbringt einen Erholungsurlaub mit seiner Mutter auf dem Semmering, als er dort einen jungen Baron trifft, dessen Freundschaft er sich leidenschaftlich erhofft. Bald einmal findet er heraus, dass der Baron eigentlich nur an seiner Mutter interessiert ist und den Jungen als Mittel zum Zweck benutzt. Da wendet sich seine Zuneigung in blinden Hass. Nun wissen wir ja alle, dass Kinder anfangs des 20. Jahrhunderts nicht als eigenständige Persönlichkeiten wahrgenommen wurden. Sie hatten zu schweigen und zu parieren. Anscheinend durfte man sie auch unbehelligt anlügen und manipulieren. Denn genau dies tun der Baron und Edgars Mutter mit dem verwirrten Buben. Edgars Reaktion darauf erscheint mir jedoch ziemlich überzogen und unrealistisch. Zweig wird in der Mitte der Erzählung absolut melodramatisch, ohne jedoch eine Spur von Ironie in die Erzählung einfließen zu lassen. Wie viel besser hat hier sein irischer Kollege James Joyce in "Dubliners" (erschienen 1914) vermocht, einen leisen Unterton von Ironie seinen Geschichten einzuhauen, die damit zeitlos erscheinen und mit denen sich auch der moderne Leser stark identifizieren kann. Dies ist bei "Brennendes Geheimnis" meiner Meinung nach nicht der Fall.

Zweigs wahres Können schimmert gegen Ende des Buches wieder durch, nämlich dann wenn ein vordergründiges Happy End erst beim aufmerksamen Lesen sich als klebriges Netz von Lügen, Vertuschungen und Heuchelei entpuppt.

"Brennendes Geheimnis" wurde von einem noch relativ jungen Zweig geschrieben, in einer Zeit als seine Welt wohl noch in Ordnung war, d.h. bevor die Welt um ihn herum in dunkles Chaos fiel. Vielleicht haben die darauffolgenden schweren Zeiten erst das wahre Können Zweigs zum Erwecken gebracht? Es dauert noch eine lange Zeit, bis dass er sein Meisterwerk "Schachnovelle" veröffentlicht.

Ich habe vor vielen Jahren als Schülerin die Schachnovelle gelesen und sie ist mir bis jetzt in lebendiger Erinnerung geblieben. "Brennendes Geheimnis" war ein guter Wiedereinstieg in Zweigs Schaffen und ich bin gespannt auf das nächste Buch auf meiner Liste "Der Amokläufer", welches 1922 erschienen ist.

PS: Danke meiner GR-friend Kalliope für die Tipps beim Aufbau der Zweig-Leseliste!

Sarah saied says

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Rebecca Foster says

A psychologically astute novella in which a 12-year-old tries to interpret what's happening between his mother and a fellow hotel guest, a baron he looks up to. For this naïve boy, many things come as a shock, including the threat of sex and the possibility of deception. This reminded me most of Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*. I read a download from Project Gutenberg.

Laura ???? says

La fine dell'infanzia

Stefan Zweig, di cui avevo già letto e apprezzato "Paura", si conferma per me il sorprendente narratore che, in un limitato numero di pagine, riesce a concentrare una vicenda ricca di colpi di scena e stati d'animo in subbuglio.

È molto abile, l'autore austriaco, nel descrivere la psicologia dei suoi personaggi: Edgar, il giovanissimo protagonista di questo racconto, nel giro di pochi giorni, vivrà il passaggio dall'infanzia all'adolescenza attraverso l'improvviso intrecciarsi di sentimenti contrastanti a seguito di un flirt tra sua madre e un giovane rampante barone avvezzo alle facili avventure amorose. Tra curiosità, rabbia, sgomento e persino odio, prende forma quel "segreto" sfuggente alla piena comprensione del ragazzino, come una sorta di trauma che sentenzierà per lui la fine senz'appello dell'età spensierata dei giochi.

Incredibilmente, sono sufficienti a Zweig poche sapienti spennellate di parole per amalgamare interiorità e paesaggi: *"Le ruote giravano sempre più in fretta, le serpentine facevano scendere a valle il treno, sempre più dolci apparivano le montagne, sempre più lontane [...]. Ancora una volta si girò a guardarle, ed erano azzurre e indistinte, remote e irraggiungibili, e gli sembrava che là, dove lentamente svanivano nella foschia del cielo, stesse la sua infanzia."*

Una storia che, nonostante un inizio forse apparentemente monotono e privo di grandi significati, a un certo punto finisce per acquisire via via toni sempre più concitati sino alle battute conclusive, quando il "bruciante segreto" diverrà silenzioso patto di riconciliazione fra madre e figlio.

Sue says

I really should have written this review closer to the time I read this novella, when my reasons for my arguments were fresher in my mind. All I know is that this is the least favorite of the Zweig "entrees" on my list this year. It failed to satisfy. I note the early publication date---that is undoubtedly a factor. Zweig was writing in an early, pre-World War One world, in a style that would be thrown over after the war.

This heavily mannered style is probably what bothered me the most and somehow forced a further distance between me and the characters. I found that I had sympathy for no one, found the twelve year old boy, the lynch-pin, over-wrought and ultimately unsympathetic.

An example of my problem in a conversation between Edgar and his mother:

"Edgar, what's the matter with you? You're not yourself at all. I can't make you out. You've always been such a good, clever boy, anyone could talk to you. And suddenly you act as if the devil had got into you. What do you have against the Baron? You seemed to like him very much, and he's been so kind to you."

"Yes, because he wanted to get to know you."

She felt uneasy. "Nonsense! What are you thinking of? How can you imagine any such thing?"

But at that the child flared up.

"He's a liar, he's only pretending. He does it out of mean, horrid calculation. He wanted to get to know you.... he wants something from you too, Mama, you can be sure he does. Otherwise he wouldn't be so friendly and polite. He's a bad man...." (loc 649)

My experience of children does not have a 12 year old speaking this way to his mother. The child could certainly have grasped that something was wrong, but the essence of this speech just seems wrong.

And so I must say that I found this novella the least satisfying of all of the stories and other works by Zweig that I have read so far. But I do intend to read further in his short stories and novellas after a break.

Lubinka Dimitrova says

A powerful study in human nature. I can only be happy for the praiseworthy resurgence and admiration that many of Zweig's works are seeing lately. His close friendship with Freud has clearly affected his writings, where the main characters are often presented in "case histories", made more intriguing by the subtle observation of the inner workings of the protagonists. Here, the stages through which the young boy's relation with the Baron (and his own mother) passes through (admiration, enthusiasm, agony, desperation, resentment, determination to act - to name only a few), could be a casebook presentation for a child's logic and emotions.

Ina Cawl says

what an amazing novel by the greatest writer ever

this is a story of losing innocence, Children coming of age , learning to lie and also a little Freudian Oedipus Complex added

Rowena says

“The huntsman in him was aroused. He was intoxicated, excited to have found his right trail so quickly, to feel that the game was close to his gun. His eyes gleamed, the blood flowed easily through his veins, the words sprang from his lips with an effervescence that he himself could not explain.” - Stefan Zweig, Burning Secret

We are introduced to a young baron who is on holiday and whose desire to seduce a married woman causes him to befriend her 12 year old son. Here I thought the focus of the story would be on the baron; in fact it was on Edgar, and the story turned out to be a fascinating case-study of a lonely boy convalescing from an illness, who had “a great, unused capacity for emotion,” and was thus able to transfer his emotions to the first person who paid him any attention: the Baron.

Children see more than we think they see and one of the most interesting aspects of this book was Edgar's transformation from naïveté to relative maturity. Reading his thoughts reminded me of my own observations about the world as a child, not knowing all the answers, sensing something was being kept from me, but somehow knowing that one day I would figure it out, after all: "Sometimes it is only a flimsy door that cuts children off from what we call the real world, and a chance gust of wind will blow it open for them."

It was interesting to see the relationship of the mother and son transform through this burning secret. Edgar's thoughts in particular were fascinating as he grew to awareness :

“All those things are connected, I can feel that, it’s just that I don’t know how. Oh, how I wish I knew the secret, I wish I understood it, I wish I had the key that opens all these doors, and I wasn’t a child any more with people hiding things from me and pretending. I wish I didn’t have to be deceived and put off with excuses.”

Highly recommended!

Ali AlShewail says

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Hoda Elsayed says

ESRAA MOHAMED says

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Hend says

A lonely twelve-year-old boy Edgar, befriended a charming,lady-killer baron.it was some time before the naive Edgar realizes the true motives behind the Baron's kindness and interest, When his adored friend meanly give up on his friendship and turns his seductive attentions to his mother, the boy's jealousy and insecurity feelings of betrayal become uncontrollable, Once Edgar recognizes the truth,he is invaded by new and previously unknown emotions and new behaviors.....

It was painful for that boy, who progresses from his childish dreams into the adult world of Deception ,dishonest and evil in only a few days.....

Edgar's mother was at first resistant to the Baron charms.....

but after a while she was getting many mixed feelings of regretting having stayed faithful to a husband she never really loved,she is still young ,beautiful and desirable, an urgent choice between maternal and feminine love.....her son was her inner voice of conscience...

Vit Babenco says

Some are growing up slowly and become adult when their time comes, some just come of age without ever growing up and some only need a little push...

Edgar is a naive twelve-year old boy and the adult world is a mystery to him.

“A line was dug into his brow, the slight twelve-year-old looked almost old as he sat there brooding, without sparing a glance for the landscape unfolding its resonant colours all around: the mountains in the pure green of the coniferous forests, the valleys still young with the fresh bloom of spring, which was late this year. All he saw was the couple opposite him on the back seat of the carriage, as if his intense glances, like a fishing-line, could bring the secret up from the gleaming depths of their eyes. Nothing whets the intelligence more than a passionate suspicion, nothing develops all the faculties of an immature mind more than a trail running away into the dark. Sometimes it is only a flimsy door that cuts children off from what we call the real world,

and a chance gust of wind will blow it open for them."

But when he becomes an unsuspicious vertex in an adult love triangle he begins to surmise that there is some secret and grownups may lie and deceive in order to prevent him from penetrating their world.

Burning Secret is a brilliant coming-of-age story of a rare psychological insight.

Tugba says

Zweig, buraya kadar ?ahit oldu?umuz eserlerinde genç bir kad?n?n ruhunu bize nas?l ya?at?yor, psikolojisini nas?l bir ustal?kla aktar?yorsa bu eserinde de 12 ya??ndaki bir erkek çocu?unun hem de duygusal aç?dan oldukça zor bir durumdaki çocu?un (Edgar), ruhunu ayn? ustal?kla ya?at?yor bizlere. Kusursuzca!

Annesi ile ç?kt??? k?sa tatilde tan??t??? bir yeti?kin ona çok yak?n ve ilgili davranış?r.

Birdenbire hayat?na giren bu ki?i Edgar'? inan?lmaz derecede mutlu eder öyle ki tüm vaktini onunla geçirmek için her?eyi feda etmeye haz?rd?r. Edgar tam da en gerçek ve en güvenilir arkadaş?a sahip oldu?unu d?ünürken, sonralar? bu yeti?kin arkadaş? ile ilgili çok büyük bir hayal k?r?kl??? ya?ar. Çok güvendi?i arkadaş?? gerçekte çapk?n bir barondur ve as?l amac? orada keyifli vakit geçirmek ad?na bir flört olarak annesini elde etmektir. ??te tam da burada Zweig bize Edgar'?n çocuk kalbinin ve y?k?lan dünyas?n?n kap?lar?n? aç?yor. Sayfalar? ard? ard?na çevirdikçe Edgar'?n incinen duygular?n? derinden ya??yor bir halde buluyoruz kendimizi. En az onun kadar kalbimiz k?r?l?yor, en az onun kadar çaresiz kal?yoruz. Kitab?n sonunu ayr?ca çok be?endim. Bir çocuk için, ona gösterilen sevginin ne denli önemli ve etkili oldu?unun alt? özenle çizilmi? hikayede.

Her kitap bitiri?imde ayn? ?eyi hissediyorum; hem Zweig ile müthi? gurur duyuyor, hem de bir türlü kabullenemedi?im o ac? son ile bu dünyadan ayr?l???na kahroluyorum.

Umar?m duygusal, narin ki?ili?i yatt??? yerde huzura kavu?mu?tur.

T.

Cirano says

"Solo più tardi, molti anni dopo, riconobbe in quelle lacrime silenziose una solenne promessa, da parte della donna avviata al declino: la promessa di appartenere in futuro solo a lui, al suo figliolo; una rinuncia all'avventura, un addio a tutte le proprie concupiscenze.

Non sapeva che anche lei gli era grata per essere sfuggita a una sterile avventura, e che ora, con quell'abbraccio, gli lasciava il dolceamaro fardello dell'amore come retaggio per la vita futura.

Tutto ciò il bambino di allora non lo comprese, ma senti' che era molto esaltante essere amati in quel modo e che attraverso questo amore era già coinvolto nel grande segreto del mondo"

Questo passo di questo breve racconto di Zweig credo sintetizzi al meglio il senso della vicenda narrata: il passaggio dall'adolescenza all'età adulta di Edgar durante un soggiorno con la madre in un albergo di Semmerig; madre che intraprendere una relazione extraconiugale con un giovane nobile un po' spiantato lì conosciuto.

Edgar tenta allora in ogni modo di opposizione a questo fatto che non comprende fino in fondo è che lo porterà all'aggressione fisica del "rivale" e successivamente alla fuga dall'albergo lasciando la madre nella

disperazione. Con questo gesto, più che con altre azioni, impedira' quello che più temeva e cioè il tradimento della madre nei confronti del padre. Sarà infine, dopo essere stato ritrovato, un gesto della madre a far sì che non svelasse quanto accaduto in quell'albergo e a creare tra di loro un clima di complicità.

Zeynep says

4,5*

Zweig, sen nas? I bu kadar müthi? yazabiliyorsun ya?

Kalliope says

This is the story of Gustav von Aschenbach. No, wait a minute. I'm confused. It is Hans Castorp whom we follow. OMG, what a mess I'm making. We don't really know the name of the protagonist. We only know that he is a Baron, and The Baron he remains for the rest of the book, although we later learn, in passing, the name of his father, Count Grundheim. But the Baron is the Baron, a type. He is a member of the second or third level of the complex aristocratic structure as it existed in the Austro-Hungarian Empire prior to WWI.

The story then is about this Baron who travels by train to Davos, to visit a Sanatorium. No, no... Erase that. He travels further south than Davos. He goes to Trieste and from there takes the boat to Pola and then Venice where he goes on holidays to a nice hotel.

I obviously do not know what I am writing. Our Austrian hero is indeed traveling by train but to a resort, and not to a Sanatorium, and he is not going abroad but remaining in his country. He is going to the elegant **Semmering**, in the Eastern part of modern Austria.

Finally I got it straight.

So, the Baron is bored, because he is not one of those individuals who knows how to be alone; he is therefore not a reader and could not have formed part of the GR population. As someone for whom his own interior is no company he decides to go hunting instead. By hunting I mean that he sets himself on the prey of a woman. And now I am getting again confused with Georges Duroy, our beautiful *Bel Ami*. But no, our Baron is not a social climber, he just wants female entertainment. So we can leave nineteenth century literature completely and its concern with social mobility.

But what is it about Germanic fiction in the years prior to WWI that presents us with similar beginnings? Having read *Death in Venice* (1912) recently and being now in the midst of *The Magic Mountain* (conceived also in 1912), this novella from 1911 has thrown me into a confusing muddle.

But suddenly there is a turn in the book and now I know well where I am. I am reading *Brennendes Geheimnis* or *Burning Secret*.

There is a child here. There is the twist. This is Edgar and we now see the world through the eyes of this young teenager. I feel in new sound ground.

And with this swing I am far away from Thomas Mann and his fixations with his abstract and dualistic ideas, and I can breathe. We are not presented with characters preoccupied with the abyss and destructive passions or deceiving rationalities that do not appease the tormented or explain the phenomenon of life. There is a different scent in the air.

This is Stefan Zweig writing. There is a wider range and subtlety of shades. Through the child, and unfolding a gripping plot, which at times has the tantalizing tones of a thriller, Zweig explores the whole array of human emotions as they germinate in a budding individual. If hatred, and jealousy, and revenge, and betrayal, and bitterness, and rancor are all human reactions, Zweig also uncovers the forgiving, the tolerant, the brave, the benign, the thankful, and the warmhearted, as these qualities take the upper hand. It is the realization that life has many faces and that people need each other, no matter what, that make this courageous youth enter the mind of his new self with all his humane facets fully unveiled.

This is a beautiful novella and I wish I could watch the film produced in 1988 with Klaus-Maria Brandauer and Faye Dunaway in the cast.

????????? says

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Irmak says

Yine ba?l? ba??na bir Zweig harikas?yd?. Bir çocu?un duygular?, büyüklerin dünyas?n? ke?fi anca bu kadar güzel anlat?labilirdi.

Sadece di?er okuduklar?mdan bir t?k daha a?a??da buldu?um icin bir puan k?rd?m.