

Private Excavations - David Robbins

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In Private Excavations, South African author David Robbins explores the historical roots and contemporary impact of religious fundamentalism - the archetypal one-truth perception of the world. This is essentially a travel book. The author visits those parts of Germany, Sweden and Norway that spawned fundamentalist Christianity in its earliest form (Pietism), as well as the Pietist-inspired circumstances and convictions that brought his Scandinavian forebears as missionaries to the eastern seaboard of South Africa. The urge to make such explorations first stirred in him during the deep political disturbances that wracked Natal-KwaZulu in the late 1980s. Robbins' investigations are given depth and perspective by his interest in the lives of two prominent Scandinavians (playwright August Strindberg and artist Edvard Munch). But it is the author's pursuit of his own ancestors - his private excavations - that remain the central focus of this work; and it is this personal intent that lends an intimacy and penetration to his insights into an indisputably universal theme. As one reader has remarked: 'Private Excavations is superb travel writing with a profoundly important purpose.' Some of the special attractions of the book include

- Visits to Spandau and Halle where Pietism was conceived and first practised.
- The pervasive sense of brutality and division in Berlin as counterpoint to the realities of apartheid South Africa in the violent 1980s.
- Strindberg and Munch's rigid Pietist upbringings juxtaposed with those of the author's Swedish and Norwegian forebears.
- Visits to Stockholm and Oslo
- Excursions into the art history of early 20th century Europe.
- Travelling through the wild landscapes of Norway's West Coast with a well-known Norwegian author.
- The outer journey supported and given substance by the author's inner journey through the rigidities and follies of a simplistic one-truth vision of existence.

Author: Robbins, David
Publisher: Porcupine Press trading under DGR Writing & R Illustration: N Language: ENG Title: Private Excavations Pages: 00000 (Encrypted PDF) On Sale: 2012-03-15 SKU-13/ISBN: 9780987034632
Category: Juvenile Nonfiction : Religion - Biblical Biography Category: Juvenile Nonfiction : Religious - Christian - Family & Relat

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