Seven Tattoos: A Memoir in the Flesh
by Peter Trachtenberg

Peter Trachtenbergs Seven Tattoos: A Memoir in the Flesh is much more than the memories of an eloquent writer. Its wild anthropology, eclectic theology, literary observation, and a treatise on the uses of body modification and tattooing. Even Trachtenbergs most harrowing and absurd experiences become universal through his illuminating prose.

As a Jew drawn to the ritual of Catholicism, plagued by its guilt and craving its absolution, he gets a tattoo of the wound of Christ. An unfilial son and regretful lover, he marks himself with the Archangel Michael, who drove Adam and Eve from Paradise. Most tattoos are signifiers of the past, commemorating events that have already transpired. Thats how I see most of mine, Trachtenberg explains. But tattoos may also act upon the future, protect the body from impending danger or consecrate it for some arduous task ahead.

Each chapter in Seven Tattoos explores the theme evoked by the corresponding tattoo: death, sacrilege, primitivism, rebellion, atonement, sadomasochism, downfall. Each of Trachtenbergs seven tattoos is a totem, a print the world has left on him that he has chosen to display on his body. Like fresh ink, Seven Tattoos is striking, bold and indelible.

My Personal Review:
7 tattoos is a true rarity in the world of literature: An enjoyable and fascinating autobiography about someone most of us have never heard of. Trachtenberg uses the 7 tattoos on his body, the universal symbol of dysfunction, as a road-map into his consciousness and experiences. What
emerges is not a self-indulgent man without redeeming qualities as someone else asserted, but a portrait of humanity as a whole, its ugliness and selfishness explored to the fullest. To call Trachtenberg unlikable is to call humanity unlikable. What he does so successfully is shine the light on his own life, which in turn shines it on our own. And if for no other reason than that, this is one of the most brilliant self-exporations to come along in years.

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