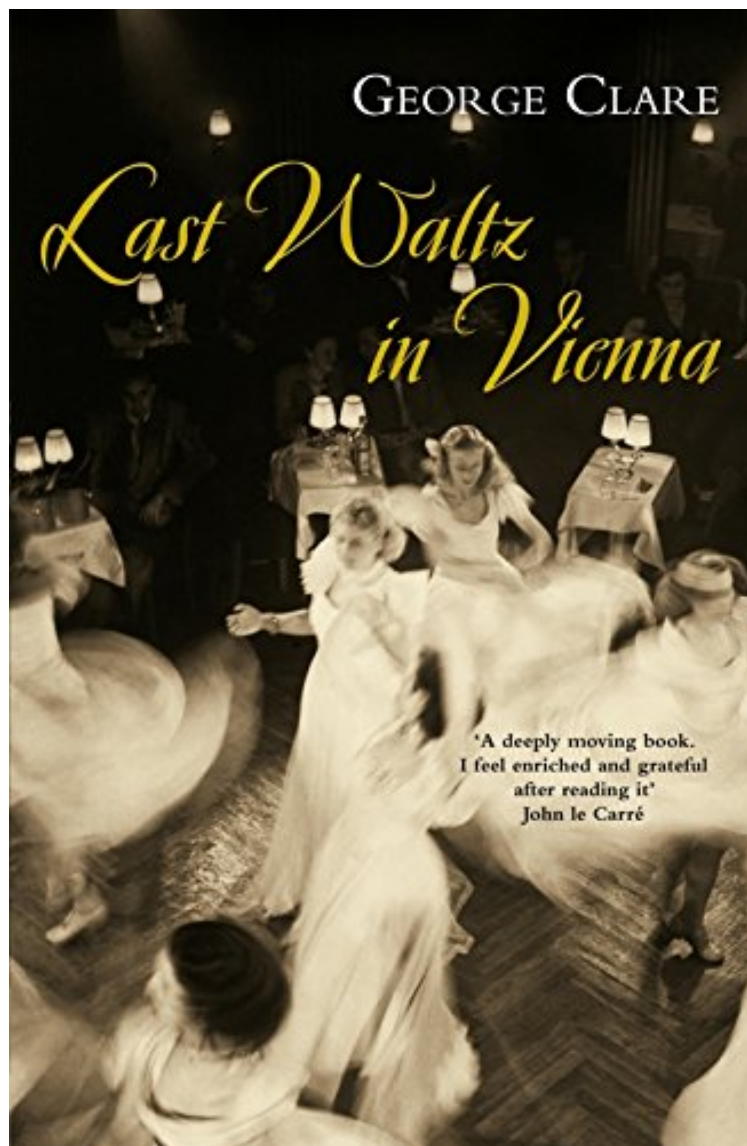


(Download pdf) Last Waltz in Vienna

Last Waltz in Vienna

George Clare

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George Clare : Last Waltz in Vienna before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Last Waltz in Vienna:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. "...A la recherch des parents perdu..."By John P. Jones IIIAt the very end of this book, George Clare is in the small village of St. Pierreville, in the Ardche, France, in search of the last fragments of the lives of his parents, including those which may reside in the minds of the village's inhabitants. His Jewish parents were deported from this small village to the gas chambers at Auschwitz during World War II. It is now

after the war, and one of the inhabitants, who, as Clare says, was unlikely to have ever read Proust, said: "It is too late to be searching for lost parents." Clare's poignant and heart-breaking memoir not only searches for, but admirably commemorates not only the lives of his parents, but of his family and the entire Jewish society of Austria that was destroyed by adherents of the Nazi ideology. And those that did nothing to stop it. Clare started life with the last name of "Klaar," which, as he points out, could be a Jewish name, but also a Dutch one. He "anglicized" it to its present form after he emigrated from Austria to England, and was in the process of trying to join the British Army. Clare relates this at the beginning of his memoir. He is berating the British a bit, for not immediately accepting him into their army; he seems to minimize or ignore the fact that he is a national of a hostile power during war, and it was the only time in the book I thought he was being a bit "illogical." Clare then goes back to relate the history of five generations of the Klaar's starting with great-great grandfather Eissak, who was born in 1780. The author also relates the history of three generations on his mother's side, the Schapiras'. There is a very handy family tree at the beginning of the book which certainly helped me place all the names in the narrative. Clare describes the position of his family in what was then the Austro-Hungarian Empire. His great-grand father, Dr. Hermann, had moved out of a Jewish ghetto on the eastern fringe of the empire, and became a doctor in Vienna. The army helped provide upward mobility: he took part in the Battle of Solferino, in present-day Italy, in 1859, along with the Emperor, Franz-Josef. Unquestionably Jews faced discrimination in the Empire; the "father" of Zionism, after all, Theodor Herzl, was from Vienna. Still, it was largely a tolerant empire, trying to reconcile the conflicting aspirations of its nationalities, including the Jews. In Clare's words: "we have despotism mellowed by indolence." After World War I, the rump state of Austria was depicted as constantly adrift, trying to find its new place in the world; almost certainly this is accurate. There was a lot of history that I did not know, including the murder of the Austrian Prime Minister, Dollfuss, in 1934. From being relevantly tolerant, Clare's assessment of the anti-Semitism in Austria, even vis--vis Germany is scathing: "The 'lousy anti-Semitism' of the Germans led many German Jews to believe that they could go on living in their beloved Germany, while the 'first-class anti-Semitism' of the Austrians left no Jew in any doubt that he had to get out of the country as quickly as possible." And getting out was anything but easy! Only one European country, Latvia, would still easily take Austrian Jews, and Clare's attempt to achieve sanctuary there failed (probably fortuitously, given that country's fate in a couple of years). Against the backdrop of the political upheavals of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and its aftermath is the family history of the Klaar's and Schapiras'. Loves and hates, perhaps more intense, due to their tight-knitnes. Conflicts with his father over his first love. Conflicts with his father, who had seen the horror of WW I as a soldier, over joining the Army to fight WW II. But for Clare, the "evil" is never "all out there." He is introspective, and asks some hard questions, like, if I had not been Jewish, could I not have been besotted with the "glory" of the enterprise, and joined the Wehrmacht, saving Christian civilization from godless communism? To what degree am I responsible for my father's death, in encouraging him to stay in France, so that he might not interfere with my marriage to be beloved? Some hard questions. Then there is the matter of: how could you not see that the death camps were inevitable? He mentions Arthur Schnitzler, who I first became acquainted with through Clive James' Cultural Amnesia. Clare says: "A genius of foresight, an Arthur Schnitzler perhaps, would have understood. Father was no Schnitzler." And there were all the logical reasons not to see it; at another point they say: the Germans only got as far as the Marne last time, and this time we have the Maginot Line! Primo Levi in *The Drowned and the Saved* also debunks the validity of 20-20 hindsight, incisively mentioning the reaction of all of us to the possibility of a nuclear holocaust. And Clare, like Levi, does not omit the brutal treatment of Jews on Jews. How we might all act, in extremis. An excellent, multi-layered, 5-star, plus, read. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Sensitive, thoughtful and eminently readable account of Jewish life in Vienna until the Nazi' changed everything. By Martha Holstein A sensitive, beautiful memoir of growing up in an affluent, assimilated Jewish family who then became the Nazi's victims. A love letter to Vienna and a thoughtful reflection on why it was so hard to accept the reality of the Nazi message and actions. Exposes the deep Austrian anti-Semitism 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Touching and fascinating autobiographical exploration of Clare's youth and maturation ... By Richard H. Schnadig Touching and fascinating autobiographical exploration of Clare's youth and maturation under the benevolent protection of his Viennese parents until no one could protect him or them following Hitler's take over on Austria. More than another Holocaust book.

On February 26, 1938, 17-year-old Georg Klaar took his girlfriend Lisl to his first ball at the Konzerthaus. His family was proudly Austrian; they were also Jewish, and two weeks later came the German Anschluss. This incredibly affecting account of Nazi brutality towards the Jews includes a previously unpublished post-war letter from the authors uncle to a friend who had escaped to Scotland. This moving epistle passes on the news of those who had survived and the many who had been arrested, deported, murdered, or left to die in concentration camps, and those who had been orphaned or lost their partners or children. It forms a devastating epilogue to what has been hailed as a classic of

holocaust literature.