



Missing Out: In Praise of the Unlived Life

By Adam Phillips

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Missing Out: In Praise of the Unlived Life By Adam Phillips

A transformative book about the lives we wish we had and what they can teach us about who we are

All of us lead two parallel lives: the one we are actively living, and the one we feel we should have had or might yet have. As hard as we try to exist in the moment, the unlived life is an inescapable presence, a shadow at our heels. And this itself can become the story of our lives: an elegy to unmet needs and sacrificed desires. We become haunted by the myth of our own potential, of what we have in ourselves to be or to do. And this can make of our lives a perpetual falling-short.

But what happens if we remove the idea of failure from the equation? With his flair for graceful paradox, the acclaimed psychoanalyst Adam Phillips suggests that if we accept frustration as a way of outlining what we really want, satisfaction suddenly becomes possible. To crave a life without frustration is to crave a life without the potential to identify and accomplish our desires.

In this elegant, compassionate, and absorbing book, Phillips draws deeply on his own clinical experience as well as on the works of Shakespeare and Freud, of D. W. Winnicott and William James, to suggest that frustration, not getting it, and getting away with it are all chapters in our unlived lives?and may be essential to the one fully lived.

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Editorial Review

From Bookforum

In *Missing Out*, Phillips seeks to render the self-punishing rigors of envisioning alternate lives—denied lives, better lives, more outrageous lives—into a normal-ish study in badly managed life expectations. While our lives are a seesaw of frustration and fulfillment, the eventual satisfaction never quite measures up. Because of its wild ranginess, its unwillingness to be American and tell me what to think, *Missing Out* brought me a strange and maybe obvious kind of comfort. —Choire Sicha

Review

“A wonderfully concise appeal for presentness...Elegantly stated.” ?*The Boston Globe*

“*Missing Out* is [Adam Phillips's] most poetic, paradoxical, repetitive, and punning yet; he doesn't argue in a linear fashion but nestles ideas within ideas, like Russian dolls.” ?Sheila Heti, *The New York Times Book Review*

“[Adam Phillips] has an elegant prose style...with a talent for turning a phrase, a knack for epigrams” ?*Los Angeles Review of Books*

“Extraordinary...Always humane, never reductive, Phillips is one of those writers whom it is a pleasure simply to hear think.” ?*The Sunday Telegraph (London)*

About the Author

Adam Phillips is a psychoanalyst and a visiting professor in the English department at the University of York. He is the author of many books, including *On Kissing, Tickling, and Being Bored; Going Sane; Side Effects*; and *On Balance*. He is also the coauthor, with the historian Barbara Taylor, of *On Kindness*; with the critic Leo Bersani, of *Intimacies*; and with the exhibition-maker Judith Clark, of *The Concise Dictionary of Dress*.

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