

Gargoyles Thomas Bernhard

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The playwright and novelist Thomas Bernhard was one of the most widely translated and admired writers of his generation, winner of the three most coveted literary prizes in Germany. *Gargoyles*, one of his earliest novels, is a singular, surreal study of the nature of humanity. One morning a doctor and his son set out on daily rounds through the grim mountainous Austrian countryside. They observe the colorful characters they encounter—from an innkeeper whose wife has been murdered to a crippled musical prodigy kept in a cage—coping with physical misery, madness, and the brutality of the austere landscape. The parade of human grotesques culminates in a hundred-page monologue by an eccentric, paranoid prince, a relentlessly flowing cascade of words that is classic Bernhard.

Three novellas by the European novelist--*Amras*, *Playing Watten*, and *Walking*--explore the psychological crisis precipitated by modern life, with two being translated into English for the first time. (General Fiction)

Thomas Bernhard was one of the most original writers of the twentieth century. His formal innovation ranks with Beckett and Kafka, his outrageously cantankerous voice recalls Dostoevsky, but his gift for lacerating, lyrical, provocative prose is incomparably his own. One of Bernhard's most acclaimed novels, *The Loser* centers on a fictional relationship between piano virtuoso Glenn Gould and two of his fellow students who feel compelled to renounce their musical ambitions in the face of Gould's incomparable genius. One commits suicide, while the other-- the obsessive, witty, and self-mocking narrator-- has retreated into obscurity. Written as a monologue in one remarkable unbroken paragraph, *The Loser* is a brilliant meditation on success, failure, genius, and fame.

The narrator, a scientist working on antibodies and suffering from emotional and mental illness, meets a Persian woman, the companion of a Swiss engineer, at an office in rural Austria. For the scientist, his endless talks with the strange Asian woman mean release from his condition, but for the Persian woman, as her own circumstances deteriorate, there is only one answer. "Thomas Bernhard was one of the few major writers of the second half of this century."--Gabriel Josipovici, *Independent* "With his death, European letters lost one of its most perceptive, uncompromising voices since the war."--*Spectator* Widely acclaimed as a novelist, playwright, and poet, Thomas Bernhard (1931-89) won many of the most prestigious literary prizes of Europe, including the Austrian State Prize, the Bremen and Brückner prizes, and Le Prix Séguier.

Instead of the book he's meant to write, Rudolph, a Viennese musicologist, produces this dark and grotesquely funny account of small woes writ large, of profound horrors detailed and rehearsed to the point of distraction. We learn of Rudolph's sister, whose help he invites, then reviles as malevolent meddling; his 'really marvelous' house, which he hates; the suspicious illness he carefully nurses; his ten-year-long attempt to write the perfect opening sentence; and, finally, his escape to the island of Majorca, which turns out to be the site of someone else's very real horror story. A brilliant and haunting tale of procrastination, failure, and despair, *Concrete* is a perfect example of why Thomas Bernhard is remembered as "one of the masters of contemporary European fiction" (George Steiner).

There are as many truths about the sex trade as there are people who participate in it. In this new collection of creative nonfiction, people who've tangled with the sex industry write about the complications that arise in the mix of sex and money. From the accounts of love and loss, occupational hazards and tricks of the trade to personal stories of hope, resistance and survival, *Pros(e)* is a fiery collection of narratives by people who have walked the walk, and are now telling their tales. The contributions in the book were written by the participants of the Red Umbrella Project's first Becoming Writers Workshop, which took place in Fall 2012.

From the late Thomas Bernhard, arguably Austria's most influential novelist of the postwar period, and one of the greatest artists in all twentieth-century literature in the German language, his magnum opus. *Extinction*, Bernhard's last work of fiction, takes the form of the autobiographical testimony of Franz-Josef Murau, the intellectual black sheep of a powerful Austrian land-owning family. Murau lives in Rome in self-imposed exile from his family, surrounded by a coterie of artistic and intellectual friends. On returning from his sister's wedding to the "wine-cork manufacturer" on the family estate of Wolfsegg, having resolved never to go home again, Murau receives a telegram informing him of the death of his parents and brother in a car crash. Not only must he now go back, he must do so as the master of Wolfsegg. And he must decide its fate. Divided into two halves, *Extinction* explores Murau's rush of memories of Wolfsegg as he stands at his Roman window considering the fateful telegram, in counterpoint to his return to Wolfsegg and the preparations for the funeral itself. Written in the seamless style for which Bernhard became famous, *Extinction* is the ultimate proof of his extraordinary literary genius. It is his summing-up against Austria's treacherous past and -- in unprecedented fashion -- a revelation of his own incredibly complex personality, of his relationship with the world in which he lived, and the one he left behind. A literary event of the first magnitude.

It is 1967. In separate wings of a Viennese hospital, two men lie bedridden. The narrator, named Thomas Bernhard, is stricken with a lung ailment; his friend Paul, nephew of the celebrated philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, is suffering from one of his periodic bouts of madness. As their once-casual friendship quickens, these two eccentric men begin to discover in each other a possible antidote to their feelings of hopelessness and mortality—a spiritual symmetry forged by their shared passion for music, strange sense of humor, disgust for bourgeois Vienna, and great fear in the face of death. Part memoir, part fiction, *Wittgenstein's Nephew* is both a meditation on the artist's struggle to maintain a solid foothold in a world gone incomprehensibly askew, and a stunning—if not haunting—eulogy to a real-life friendship.

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