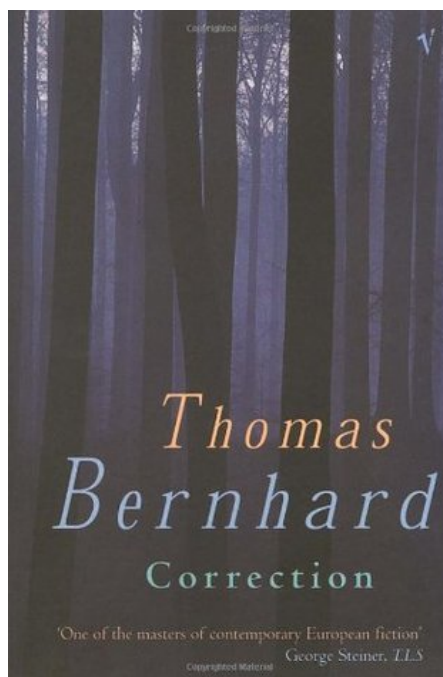




Correction

Thomas Bernhard , Sophie Wilkins (Translator)

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Roithamer, a character based on Wittgenstein, has committed suicide having been driven to madness by his own frightening powers of pure thought. We witness the gradual breakdown of a genius ceaselessly compelled to correct and refine his perceptions until the only logical conclusion is the negation of his own soul.

Correction Details

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Cosimo says

La radura possibile

“Tutta l'epoca in cui viviamo oggi in verità è sempre stata contro il pensiero e si limita a fingere di pensare, la tendenza oggi è contro il pensiero ed è per la finzione, come in genere tutta quest'epoca in cui viviamo è finta, tutto è finto, nulla è reale, tutto è finto”.

Nella visione letteraria di Thomas Bernhard la descrizione è il contrario del reale: tutto è vero ed è falso, il linguaggio è inutile, siamo solo esecutori mancanti, la superficie terrestre è riempita di frammenti. E così egli descrive solo ciò che non vede nessuno. Se pensiamo, non sappiamo, ci rifugiamo in un'idea, che non conosciamo per nulla, è un residuo. Non è l'Altro al quale ci avviciniamo, allontanandoci, a non corrispondere ai nostri sensi, è la realtà che uccide e sbalordisce perché impossibile da trasformare, da correggere, ogni correzione comporta una nuova correzione. Fino alla correzione definitiva, quell'inclinazione alla follia, quella predisposizione alla morte disturbante e distruttiva, che è il suicidio. Come scrisse Ingeborg Bachmann, *“in Bernhard ogni cosa diventa sotterranea e abissale”*. Lo scienziato Roithamer è il protagonista del romanzo, formato sull'immagine cognitiva del filosofo austriaco Ludwig Wittgenstein ed è una figura maniacale e archetipica: la sua avventura conoscitiva e umana è orientata dai caratteri classici e logici della riflessione neopositivista e della genialità negativa, ma è al tempo stesso marcata da discontinuità, dispersione, schizofrenia, paranoia, come contraddizioni esclusive della modernità. Non solo dialettica ordine e caos, ma soprattutto parola-lacrima e indicibile-incomunicabile. La sua scrittura, metanarrativa e metalinguistica, si riproduce continuamente come differimento del momento conclusivo, esercizio di pensiero in cui risiede l'unica opzione all'essere. Perché Roithamer, doppio dell'io narrante, è a sua volta copia e modello dell'autore effettivo, Thomas Bernhard (del quale simula la personalità): precipita nel sospetto, si sposta in un luogo per comprendere l'altro, ama la sorella per salvarla, la uccide costruendo per lei una casa irrealizzabile, che costituisce la massima felicità, la perfezione, quella geometria lirica nel mezzo del bosco, natura innaturale, mondo di cui appropriarsi, mondo originario, oscurità oscura nella quale scomparire, svanire come in un crepaccio abissale nel ghiaccio. Bernhard scrive per ricomporre la frattura io-mondo, natura-linguaggio, per liberarsi dalla colpa dell'essere infelice, per legittimare l'odio verso se stesso, verso il padre e la madre e i fratelli, per opporsi all'immense, contenere il tormento, esprimere la propria finitezza e smascherare la propria ipocrisia. E' uno studio, una ricerca, un progetto di delirante perfezione, è un'archeologia dell'introspezione; rievoca la memoria delle esperienze che lo hanno segnato positivamente, con vitalità e gioia, il sentiero della scuola che percorreva serenamente e coraggiosamente con i compagni e la rosa gialla regalata a una sconosciuta, emblema della possibile beatitudine. C'è qui un'idea di ascesi, di spiritualità mistica, da frequentare con la purezza dell'idealità. Fino al momento in cui l'odio come una malattia travolge ogni cosa, ci si scopre indifesi, disarmati nella rivolta nichilista, la scelta di isolarsi diventa cattiva coscienza, l'ossessione pervade ogni facoltà, viene la disgrazia, il notturno, la vergogna di abitare un mondo che non ci appartiene, l'impossibilità di portare a compimento le proprie responsabilità, di farsi carico di un destino dolente e angosciante, estraneo: sfondare il confine ultimo, estremo fallimento, estrema inattuabilità, impotenza del singolo nel fragore della condanna, nella prigione dell'intransigenza, nella mostruosità verso il prossimo. Roithamer cerca di essere come un altro, nella scrittura, nella lettura, nella costruzione del cono in mezzo al bosco, nel manoscritto (*“Correggere le bozze e l'intero libro significava annientare le bozze e l'intero manoscritto. Ma con l'annientamento del suo documento ne sorge uno nuovo”*). Improvvisamente si trova all'estremo dell'esistenza, inquieto e disperato. Ma non può smettere di ricordare, né di riflettere; non dorme, si osserva, vive contro se stesso. Tragicamente la conseguenza dell'intensità della solitudine, il declino dell'anima, ha la meglio sull'amore per la vita. Non utopico: entropico. Come scrive Vincenzo Quagliotti nell'ottima prefazione, dalle vite non vissute verso un nuovo orizzonte. Trasformazione. Violazione. Distruzione. *Correzione*.

“Ma il bello dei miei libri è appunto che il bello non vi è mai descritto, e in questo modo nasce da sé. E quelli che descrivono solo il bello, beh, quelli scrivono libri brutti e orribili. La letteratura io la vedo così”.

Szplug says

Who hasn't experienced that 3 AM clarity, when—having been rudely yanked away from the dreamy re-runs currently playing in slumberland—wakefulness descends upon you with an unwanted crispness, retuning your awareness to one that acutely perceives and identifies things and strains formerly subsumed into your everyday existence—personality traits, crippling delusions and illusions, carefully constructed battlements and barriers that have been erected to ward off select discernment or apprehension of all manner of truths about one's manner of living, and this structure configured within space-time wherein such living takes place—and which are limned in all of their despairing reality and existential horror with a detail that is terrifying. One simply couldn't *live* basking in the cold black sun of such a perspective, in the caustic gaze of that lidless eye that mercilessly penetrates all of your quotidian glammers and masks and exposes the quaking, quailing, naked individuality within. A Thomas Bernhard novel always features a narrator—or a character for whom the narrator provides the voice—who has an enduring experience of that ocular searchlight from the shadowy vales of night far beyond that which most human beings could sustain without losing their minds. Not that Bernhard's creatures *haven't* lost, or *won't* lose theirs, mind you—but they have retained a vestige of sanity enough to allow them to set down these tortuous insights before leaving this hateful world for another.

Carrying right along from where *The Lime Works* left off, *Correction* features the scholar-student Roithamer, the estranged scion of the Austrian gentry estate of Altensam, a disturbed man who, in the midst of shuttling back and forth between a professional life at Cambridge and his home of Altensam which he both loves and loathes, plumbs his genius to harvest the virgin idea of building a geometrically perfect and personality-infused edifice—in the form of a giant, multi-level cone—dead center in the vast Kobernausser forest. Why do such a curious thing? To present it as a place of abode for his beloved sister, a quiet, introspective lass who has been flattened by the twin assaults of an overbearing, hostile mother (aided and abetted by her eldest and youngest sons) and a beloved-but-distant father who apparently regretted siring each of his children upon first sight. Inspired by the taciturn Hoeller—a childhood friend-*cum*-taxidermist who planned, and built, a uniquely suitable abode perched astride the treacherous gorge of the Aurach river, one whose garret provides the one place on earth where Roithamer can sift AM thoughts with a degree of confidence—Roithamer realizes that *only* his *wunderKone* can provide the security and happiness that will save his dear sister, and sinks all of his vast fortune and formidable intellect into achieving this bizarre-but-laudable scheme. Alas, no sooner has the Cone been completed, and presented to a trembling sibling who has long dreaded this moment, than the sister quickly succumbs to a deathly illness. Not long after, Roithamer hangs himself in a clearing midpoint between Altensam and the neighboring village of Stocket, thus continuing a family (perhaps Austrian) tradition of *erasing one's map* when life proves unendurable.

The first half of the book is narrated by a faceless childhood friend of both Hoeller and Roithamer, who is recovering from a nasty bout of pneumonia in the same garret where Roithamer found such spiritual and mental solace and has finally decided to comb through the thousands of notes and jottings—and one manuscript—left behind by the suicide. The second half consists of said notes and jottings and manuscript presented, via the narrator, in Roithamer's voice. The two personalities bear little in the way of difference, the narrator being a continuation of Roithamer's thought processes, a personality who shares many of the quirks and obsessions that plagued the Cone builder. Both are minds that circle around and repeat, that cling to phrases and routines, venturing off now and then into narrow digressions that illuminate a wide array of neuroses and paranoia, profundities and cavils, hatreds and admirations, but *always* returning to their existential base camp, to circle around, to lather, rinse and repeat. We discover that Roithamer has made

many *corrections* to his principal essay, having distilled it, by way of emendation, striking out, and underline, from several hundred pages to half-again as many, then grinding it down further to a final eighty. This process of correcting reveals what the reader will doubtless have already begun to suspect: that the events and personalities that Roithamer describes may, in fact, be nothing *at all* like the author has delineated. This includes both his mother and his sister—indeed, considering that the Cone was painstakingly built to perfectly reflect all of the latter's needs, hopes, and aspirations, it is quite remarkable what a deadly poison the final result turns out to be. Is the sister Roithamer dotes upon actually, in effect, a delusion of her deteriorating brother?

This is another five-star work of brilliance from the master ranter, perhaps the best yet of his novels that I have read. Again we have nature—cruel, cold, remorseless *nature*—which sweeps man and his silly hubris aside like so much chaff, which brings entropy and decay to humanity's creations, which *necessarily* prevents Man from ever being able to realize his recurring ideas: those schemes and visions that haunt him with their perfection and purity that, upon being put to paper or canvas, set to music or shaped from the earth, are immediately revealed as ridiculous and paltry imitations, clunky incarnations of what was conceived as something supernal and sublime. As Roithamer progresses deeper into his despair, abuts the abyss of madness, he laments how all human creativity inevitably arises from torment, that the artistic soul must perforce also be damaged. Roithamer, in perceiving *Nature's* malevolence, sees humanity not as progressing but *held down* through time, a species achieving intelligence and self-consciousness through a terrible mistake, one that nature has attempted to rectify by increasing the agonies and trials that scald man's spirit, offering the ever more attractive lure of suicide as the only sane way out of this lunatic maze. As humanity has endured it has grown more ridiculous, more isolated, more desperate; as Roithamer acknowledges late in the book, the sudden perception of how truly *lonely* we all are, how isolated from a cruel society struggling against a crueler physical world, strikes more often, and harder, as we age, leaving us benumbed and stricken. This isolation also affects *how* we understand and interpret the actions of our family and friends, colleagues and strangers—one is continually having to *correct* and revise prior opinions and estimations as their falseness, their erroneousness, their chimerical framework is revealed. We go through all the daily rituals of life in order to avoid being forced to confront the awful truths that hang over us, Damocles-like, using routine as a shield against verities too awful to acknowledge. We can thus never be certain about *anything*; the only solution, having unwillingly entered into life, is to abandon all hope and—making the ultimate *correction*—die, leaving an unlamented civilization to be overrun and buried by implacable Nature, a crumbled victim of the vast array of awesome weapons that this primeval Mother, allied with baneful Time, can bring to bear. Yet within the stark bile and endless negativity, the page-long sentences and half-book-length paragraphs, is a wicked dark humor that ameliorates the bleak, breathless, exhausting prose—and declamations of a wracked-but-ingrained humanity that effectively eases the iron clutches with which society and the world hold the individual in place.

There are few other authors who understand the way the mind works—even if only at certain periods—like Bernhard does, and can mimic this chaotic-but-structured, tiered assemblage of orbiting thoughts, echoing memes, and determined obsessions, the way that a select train of thought can be instantly derailed by the darting return of another that *won't* be denied. And his stories are invariably monologues that pour forth in an endless stream, washing over the reader and leaving no pause for air. We have nothing taking place *outside* of the thought process: there are no sex scenes in Bernhard, no parties or feasts, no glimpses of a day at the office or of the family on vacation, no joyous weddings or bitter divorces. Yet despite, or perhaps *because* of this, they are impossible to put down. There are repetitions galore, phrases reworked and reordered but always hitting the same notes; and still boredom never sets in. The effect becomes hypnotic in the best of ways, pulling the reader along into the vortex of the narrator's turbulent mind and leaving it to *them* to find their way out. They most assuredly are not for everybody, but I absolutely love them all. So Roithamer. So multitudes.

Stephen P says

The story is of obsession, the obsession of the protagonist to build a perfect Conical dwelling for his sister. It will be built in the exact center of a forrest to the exact dimensions of her character and needs. He needs to be away from others to work in locked solitude.

As a child his mother abhorred who he truly was, his father indifferent and withdrawn, his brothers buying into the families conventions. Isolation whether with others or alone was his only means of survival, of maintaining his self. It has left its marks no matter where he travels; Austria-his home-or London, or Cambridge. In order to do his work, Science, research and building the Cone, which is his life except for his friendship with the narrator, must be done with doors locked. There can be no disturbance for then he will no longer be able to return to that supreme state of concentration which shuts out the rest of the world. The disturbance ranges from someone trying to enter the room to anything out of its place including any bits of paper used as bookmarks sticking out a fraction too long from the piles of books and journals. Are we watching the deterioration of a man, a mind, a soul?

The answer is the foreground story written in the extraordinary Bernhardian style best depicted by George Steiner in the preface.

“Nowhere is Bernhard’s notorious prose, with its maddening, grating recursive and tidal motion, with its clipped understatements, with its bone bleached economy, used to deeper purpose.”

Bernhard adds to the stirred brew, smoke riddled and acid flaked, a narrator who is a major character in the proceedings. I felt the saliva and spittle across my face as he ranted the narrative forward. But it wasn’t a rant though that seems the typical word associated with Bernhard. Here, to me, it sounded and felt like desperation. A grave desperation to get his point across to get me to understand what was happening. This desperation left his told tale unreliably-interesting in that his tale is about his tragic friend’s obsession with obtaining perfection and control.

The tale, I believe, that the narrator is hoping with dear life to express is that control, perfection, truly knowing anything, is impossible. Everything is in flux, changing each moment. What we know now is different one moment later. Who ourselves are, so too, is different. In my writing this review to this point has resulted in my being different. We only agree, according to this haunting and haunted tale, on the static complexion of life as a matter of survival.

So, Roithamer made corrections to the Cone. Then corrections to his corrections and so forth. In the end is the destruction of the original idea, aim, as it only can be. Bernhard shows us, compelling and chilling that the truth can never be uncovered no matter how hard we seek, and yes we are compelled to seek.

Hugh says

This is my second experience of reading Bernhard - I read Old Masters last year, so I had a pretty good idea of what to expect from this one. Unlike Old Masters, which was written as a single long sentence, this one has normal (if convoluted) sentences, but apart from one section break halfway through, there are no paragraph breaks. This sounds forbidding but what remains is surprisingly readable, though still very nihilistic and misanthropic. In the first half of the book, the narrator explains that his friend Roithamer has

recently committed suicide and left him with the task of dealing with his papers. Roithamer is a more extreme extension of certain aspects of the philosopher Wittgenstein - like Wittgenstein he divides his time between Austria and Cambridge, came from a rich family, left most of his work unpublished and built an expensive and original house for his sister. I must stress that I know very little about Wittgenstein and his work, so most of this information is second hand - the allusions are pointed out in George Steiner's introduction. Roithamer has spent much of his time in his friend Hoeller's garret, and the narrator is invited to stay there while dealing with his papers. Hoeller is a taciturn taxidermist, and his house is also a crazy self-built vanity project, built in the Aurach gorge. Hoeller, the narrator and Roithamer have known each other since their schooldays. The first half of the book seems to repeat itself (with subtle variations which it becomes clear are corrections of a sort) - the key facts are that Roithamer has inherited Altensam, his parents' estate, that he hates the place and most of his family, that he has conceived a Cone at the centre of the Kobernausser forest as a perfect space for his sister, that he spent three years planning it and another three building it, that he could only work effectively in Hoeller's garret, in the Aurach gorge, that his sister died soon after seeing the Cone and that he, Roithamer, committed suicide shortly afterwards, leaving an incomplete masterwork covered in corrections.

The second half of the book "Sorting and Sifting", is largely told in Roithamer's own words (generally long sentences, "so Roithamer") as edited by the narrator, who occasionally intervenes, and points out what has been underlined, deleted and statted in the manuscript he is quoting. (view spoiler) This is not an easy book to read or to love, but I have to give it five stars because it is so perfectly imagined and its oppressive atmosphere is so completely realised. Thanks to The Mookse and the Gripes group and particularly to Paul for the recommendation. [I would have liked to put more paragraph breaks in this review, but decided not to in the spirit of the book!]

George Georgiadis says

γκσταση.

César says

La novela más lograda de Thomas Bernhard. En su interior resuena Kafka. El texto se desarrolla siguiendo la forma del Cono: parte de amplias circunvalaciones que van reduciendo su perímetro a medida que se gana altura. Roithamer es un caso de trastorno obsesivo-compulsivo elevado a la máxima potencia. La persona de Roithamer es su cerebro, su cabeza. Roithamer es solo y exclusivamente *una cabeza*. Cualquier proceso tendente a la apropiación total de la Naturaleza por parte de una cabeza termina en aniquilación.

jeremy says

many of the authors of whom i'm most enamored left me confounded and astounded upon my first foray into their writing. i suppose encountering greatness may always be like that initially - it's evident you've just witnessed something particularly special, however unable you are to yet make sense of what exactly you've just witnessed. so it is reading thomas bernhard for the first time. no book description, jacket copy, or recommendation in kind could really ready one for bernhard's style or story. the lasting effect, for me, was a confluence of sensations similar to inaugural readings of Pessoa and Bolaño: feeling dazzled, frightened, and not a little disquieted.

...everything in the world is done in a great rush nowadays, he'd say, everything is rushed, too rushed, every time, nothing is allowed to develop at its own natural pace, it's all done in a mad precipitate brainless rush wherever you look, people simply rush into action and the results are sheerest chaos.

correction (*korrektur*) (even the title is foreboding: no definite article, no plurality - only **one** correction!) is the austrian author's fourth novel and, by some accounts, his most acclaimed. a nameless narrator recalls the life and suicide of his scientist friend, roithamer, and is granted the (mis)opportunity to serve as his literary executor and the task of culling through both a single autobiographical manuscript and thousands of related slips of paper. the details of roithamer's obsessive quest to construct a conical domicile for his sister (in the exact center of the nearby forest) are chronicled along with those of his bitter, fixated, and exacting adulthood. roithamer's writings detail his feelings and strong opinions about architecture, contracts, criminals, suicide, rules, and unhappy marriages, as well as the cruel, tormenting, neglectful, overbearing childhood he was forced to endure.

we always enter a school only to be annihilated, the schools are gigantic institutions for the annihilation of the young, those who come to them for help are annihilated, but the state has its own good reasons for financing the schools, so roithamer, once we leave school, our slow death has simply reached a more advanced stage, nothing else. like madmen those who need spiritual help enter a school and leave it as dead men, and no one rebels against this...

correction is an unsettling, somber, and, at times, surprisingly funny novel. bernhard's prose, characterized by very long sentences and no paragraph breaks, is well-suited to the story and aids in building both tension and a sense of being slowly smothered. there is beauty and madness in roithamer's tragedy, as bernhard masterfully creates a nearly oppressive milieu. *correction* lingers, make no mistake.

signs of madness, insomnia, feeling sick of life. more and more of this soliloquizing, because i haven't got a soul left...

*translated from the german by sophie wilkins (musil's *the man without qualities*)

MJ Nicholls says

As John Peel once remarked about The Fall, “always different, always the same”, and this applies to the dissonant pulveriser Thomas Bernhard too, with *Correction* his *Perverted by Language*. (In fact, a more studious Fall/Bernhard scholar might spend some time compiling a diverting buzzfeed pairing off Fall albums to Bernhard novels [and that person will be me—check back in 2018]). As remarked in the blurb, the protagonist Roithamer is based on Wittgenstein, but knowledge of that popular philosopher is not required to penetrate the cracked skull of this obsessive-depressive. At work for six years on a large dwelling for his sister in an Austrian forest known as The Cone, Roithamer’s plans unravel when that sister commits suicide, leaving him to chronicle his mania, madness, resentment in his friend Hoeller’s garret, offering himself afterwards. This sequence of events is described by an unnamed narrator in the first part, then in Roithamer’s own words in the second, at which point the novel ramps up a gear into the deranged brilliance stakes, as Bernhard’s maddening repetitions and claustrophobic blocks of text lock the reader into his protagonist’s fascinating and hilariously disturbed mind. Genius.

Curtainthief says

It's hard to know where to begin with this book. The temptation is to write a hyper-analytical review incorporating vague knowledge gleaned from Heidegger's wikipedia page and an abandoned read-along of Being and Time to the free Dreyfus lectures on Open Culture, but I might in that case find myself initiating a process of fact-checking and correction, given the gleaned-ness of my knowledge of Heidegger, that would inevitably result in the annihilation of the review I had originally intended to write. Maybe it's better not to begin at all, and instead tiptoe my way through the Kobernausser forest, skirt the clearing.

Fionnuala says

I read this some years ago but it remains vivid in my memory, so vivid in fact that I think it might be one of the most fascinating reading experiences I've ever had because during the time I spent reading it I felt physically hypnotised by the writing, completely drawn in to the narrator's world which is really the main character Roithamer's world since the narrator is involved in the editing of his childhood friend's writings after his death, and as Roithamer's writings have already been subjected to so much correction by Roithamer himself, the resulting ideas, further corrected by the narrator, revolve in an ever narrow spiral around Roithamer's conception of the ideal building which he has built in the heart of a forest in Austria and which he calls the Cone.

Dhandayutha says

One of my all time favorite novel. A Masterpiece of Bernhard. It was Weininger who said it is impossible to transcend the object one hate. It is always very easy to throw what you love? Is it possible to throw or get rid of what you hate? One always has a complicated relationship with hate. One doesn't know what is love? When a lot of writers talk about the impossible thing in life, I always thought it must be some challenge or an egoistic ideal. At last it seems love is impossible thing in life. What is possible is always hate. One needs a lifetime to know what is love, to learn how to love. Must read!

J-Man says

Što je ovo knjige se odužilo iz prostog razloga što je u pitanju bio engleski prevod. Bernhard je poznat po posvećivanju velike pažnje stilu i po muzikalnosti svojih rečenica ali na engleskom to sve zvuči kao škripanje noktiju po tabli. Što je zanimljivo, jer se Vitgenštajn, koji je poslužio kao uzor za glavnog junaka, bavio filozofijom jezika, nemački mu je bio maternji, studirao je i predavao izmeću ostalog i na engleskom a profesori su mu bili suvoparni engleski autori poput Rasela. Kao da postoji nešto u engleskom jeziku što ga sprečava da prenese svu mistiku nemačkog.

Problematično je što je jedan ozbiljan mislilac kao što je Vitgenštajn ovde poslužio kao inspiracija, preciznije rečeno zanimljiva anegdota iz njegovog života o tome kako je projektovao kuću za svoju sestru (u jednom momentu je procenio da je plafon previše visok i da ga treba sniziti za tri centimetra i nije se smirio dok se to nije sprovedo u delo), iz prostog razloga što glavni junak u finalnoj verziji nije veliki genije već je prosto ćudak, pomeren, nakrivo nasećen. Glavni junak je naravno sam Bernhard, kao i u svim ostalim njegovim romanima. On se upušta u duge tirade kojima kritikuje Austriju, malograđanstvo, mediokritizam,

prilikom kojih dominiraju re?enice tipa 'X je najgori grad na svetu', 'pozorište/muzej Y je odvratno' ali se zadržava na tome, odnosno ne kaže nam šta ta?no ne valja i zbog ?ega ne valja. Da bi to mogao da uradi on bi naravno morao da razume onu drugu stranu, najviša dostignu?a duha ovaplo?ena u pesnicima, piscima i ostalim stvaraocima ?ija imena voli da navodi; Novalis, Hegel, Šenberg i mnogi drugi se pominju bez da se pojma ima o tome šta zna?i Novalis, šta zna?i Hegel, kao što dežurne srpske babe narika?e na Fejsbuku kukaju o nekulturi i nepismenosti a i sami su nekulturni i nepismeni. Od velikog genija on je uzeo samo idiosinkracije i ekscentri?nost, dok se sve ono najvažnije svodi na fusnotu.

Bernhard je najuspešniji kada nam pripoveda iskrenu i li?nu pri?u o svom životu i bolesti koja ga je obeležila, bez bilo kakvih pretenzija na nešto više. Kada pokuša da u?e u kožu kompleksnog filozofa kao što je Vitgenštajn, to se završava neuspehom. Autori koji su stvorili najvrednija dela književnosti, poput Dostojevskog, Mana i ostalih nisu to u?inili ve?itom kuknjavom i žalopojkama ve? su izašli van sebe i sitni?avog egoizma i uspeli da uhvate ono najvrednije i ve?no u ljudskom duhu, posve?uju?i jednaku pažnju stilu i supstanci. Bernhard poseduje samo stil.

William2.1 says

Thomas Bernhard's novels constitute perhaps the most enigmatic prose reading experience of my life. His novels are brilliant puzzles, and a single reading will probably not vouchsafe you all of a given novel's secrets. *Correction* seems a prime example. Here we are again with the typical first-person Bernhard narrator, a highly unreliable, socially connected but insensitive individual, who's circular in his reasoning, repetitious in his verbal style, almost monomaniacal in his focus, and whose torrent of words cunningly excludes subjects about which we would like to know more.

At the start of *Correction*, Roithamer, the polymath, an Austrian-born scientist teaching at Cambridge University, has just committed suicide shortly after the completion of a massive, rural architecture project, known as the Cone, for his beloved sister. The unnamed narrator, a peer and boyhood friend of Roithamer, presents a hagiographic overview early on of the late man's work; though in fact it is remarkably devoid of specifics. This fellow was named by Roithamer as his literary executor. The book starts when he shows up at a house of a taxidermist by the name of Hoeller, another boyhood friend of Roithamer, whose new home on the Aurach gorge contains the garret in which the great man did most of his intellectual work. It was here, inspired by Hoeller's daring new house, that Roithamer devised the Cone and planned and executed its construction over six years.

It is never made clear what the narrator, who seems an eerie doppelganger of the dead Roithamer, or the deceased genius himself for that matter, are supposed to be famous for. All we know about Roithamer is that he's in the natural sciences, and that he both teaches and studies at Cambridge. Of the narrator we know even less, except that he was once upbraided by Roithamer for following his (Roithamer's) ideas with too slavish an allegiance. No one but the unnamed narrator is even allowed to speak in the novel, except Roithamer himself, and then only through the texts he's left behind. There's no dialogue per se, no real-time verbal exchanges. This is very strange, and suggests a kind of jealous guarding of the narrative by the narrator. Hoeller is not allowed to speak even when spoken to, nor his wife, nor their children, nor are recollected friends and acquaintances ever allowed to say anything. So we're left with a single ranting voice, page after page, dense pages without paragraphs. The novel is in fact a single unbroken chunk of text.

Anyway, slowly, up there in Hoeller's garret, like Roithamer before him, our narrator begins to unravel. Is he, in his doppelgangerness, intentionally repeating the pattern of behavior that took Roithamer's life? Is he that much of a sycophant? Or is he being subjected to the same stresses that drove Roithamer to take his own life? Will the narrator soon take his life? The setting of Hoeller's house on the edge of the Aurach gorge,

amid the rush of turbulent waters, and the craziness not only of building a house there, but of living in such a house, is a large part of the narrator's, as it was Roithamer's, fascination with the place. It's when the narrator begins to go bonkers in the garret himself that the doubleness and connection of narrator and acolyte seems to crystalize.

Moreover, Roithamer has built his Cone for his sister in the depths of the Kobernausser forest without ever talking to her about either her willingness to live in such an isolated structure, or even if she wants such a place, even as a occasional retreat. He bases his design, he tells us, on his lifelong "observation" of his sister's character. Apparently this does not include one-on-one conversation. Right after this revelation, which left this reader astonished and a little breathless, he turns right around and lambastes contemporary architects for their inability to "investigate" their clients. The suggestion is that some kind of intellectual assessment, apart from anything a client might have to say, should be the overarching design criterion; though this something is never explicitly named.

This section seems to resolve itself into a statement on the prerogatives of the artist or creator and the manner in which the artist or creator should think and process his thoughts. Roithamer's approach is idiosyncratic, to say the least. For instance, not only should his sister *not* be consulted about the construction of the Cone, to which, we soon learn, she is averse to living in. But Roithamer must undertake the actual construction of the Cone, not on-site where the building will rise, but from Hoeller's garret, because this is where his thoughts can most readily reach fruition. A large portion of the posthumous writings are dedicated to a rant-filled recapitulation of injustices done by his parents to Roithamer during childhood. Each offence, it seems, is remembered. Each is deplored at length. Here is someone who never got over his dysfunctional childhood. He's stuck with a chip on his shoulder. He has never undergone the growth of character necessary to put those early experiences behind him, something I believe all adults must eventually try to do. He is self-pitying. This is tragic and pathetic. 'Get over it,' one thinks. But Roithamer cannot. He was long ago arrested in his emotional development, and his inability to move on--to recognize the fundamental imperfection of daily life and yet to live it fully and purposefully anyway--kills him. Character is fate.

Highly recommended, but brace yourself for a dark, dense, sexless, misogynistic, icy-hearted read.

Oliver Twist & Shout says

Algo curioso me ha ocurrido con este libro. Cuando llevaba quizá tres cuartas partes leídas, opinaba que sí, me estaba gustando, aunque sin demasiadas fiestas. Si lo pienso, en parte era debido a que, siendo la séptima obra que leo de este escritor, ya no sorprende que su prosa torrencial resulte tan sumamente legible y por lo tanto no tenía la sensación de estar superando ningún desafío. Básicamente, eso ya lo había hecho en ocasiones anteriores. Ésta no era más que una reiteración. Esa sensación de déjà vu era bastante palpable. La estructura me recordó a "Transtorno", la idea del propio territorio como origen de la propia condenación me recordó a "Amras" o "Transtorno", el personaje de Roithamer me recordaba al Glenn Gould de "El malogrado", el narrador simplemente era el mismo de siempre. Además, tampoco me acaba de hacer el peso su solipsismo y su marcada auto-compasión y en verdad no lograba encontrarle al texto un fondo más allá de la habituada cascada de quejas. Admito incluso que lo de las quejas de lo mala que era mamá me daba un poco de dentera. Era de verdad necesario ponerse así de freudiano?

Entonces llegan las últimas páginas. Ahí todo adquiere sentido. O por lo menos ahí he encontrado esas frases que parecen extraídas de mis propias divagaciones mentales y por eso mismo siento que aborda algo importante. Entiendo que "Corracción" no abarca la vida en su totalidad o que no intenta conquistar su

núcleo atómico, sencillamente nos habla de esos momentos en los que todo parece negro y desesperante. Esa clase de fases que nos debatimos entre las pulsiones suicidas y la incapacidad de ejecutarlas, la desidia que nos provoca la gente y lo imprescindible que son a pesar de todo, lo espectacular que puede resultar un momento de claridad y lo huera que resulta la existencia en su totalidad. En fin, que siento que lo que hace esta novela sólo está al alcance de un gran pensador también dotado para la escritura y que al final paga el esfuerzo requirido a crédito. Habla como pocas acerca de ese estado contradictorio de la mente. La única obra que creo que lo hace mejor que ésta es "Tala", del propio Bernhard.

Bernhard me suele gustar más cuando percibo que te introduce en una situación muy concreta, como en "Tala" y su velada dentro del ambiente teatral, o en "Amras" y sus dos hermanos abandonados a la perdición, o en "Transtorno" con el monólogo esquizoide del príncipe. "Corrección" creo que se alinea más con "El malogrado", pues ambas novelas, más que seguir el transcurso de una historia, suponen la autopsia de un desastre. Antes de ese portentoso tramo final, no he sentido en ningún momento esa sensación de estar atravesando el fondo de un abismo, sin embargo, cuando un libro concreta algo que para ti permanecía un plano abstracto, es que sin duda ha sido una lectura oportuna y vale mucho más que esas lecturas mucho más intensas pero también más epidérmicas. Así, he de concederle esa distinción de las cuatro estrellas. Los goles de la prórroga también suben al marcador.

Aparte de eso, también me gustó mucho esa sensación que la novela en verdad transcurre en un nivel metafórico. Cuando uno se da cuenta que el narrador viene a ser un doble de Roithamer, es evidente que no pretende ser realista. La función que le veo a ese artificio es que sirve para hablar de la urgente necesidad de poder de reconciliarse con uno mismo para sobrellevar esa contradicción que se genera al estar vivo y ser altamente auto-consciente. Roithamer enseña ciencias naturales y el narrador es matemático. Roithamer planeó construir una figura geométrica en medio de un claro ubicado en el centro exacto de un bosque. Esa construcción está destinada a su hermana, pero su hermana más bien parece una especie de trasposición de su madre, a quien el protagonista señala como centro de su inestabilidad mental. Por lo tanto, esa ofrenda no es más que una especie de gesto de conciliación, necesario para resolver ese conflicto interno que bombardea su mente.

Y qué curioso. A pesar que por sus libros Bernhard tenía la pinta de ser un tipo cáustico y desquiciado, había gente entre sus allegados que le veían como alguien afable y encantador. Apostaría a que Siegfried Unseld no era de esa misma opinión.

una_sussa says

Austria. L'imbalsamatore Holler riempie di cellulosa un grosso uccello nero. È incredibile quanto sia tenace questa attività, quanta cellulosa riesca a stipare all'interno dell'animale, sembra che il gesto rasenti il disfacimento dei tessuti della creatura. Dalla soffitta, l'ospite di Holler – voce narrante – deve “esaminare e riordinare” gli appunti dell'amico Roithamer, appunti che ha stipato con energica esasperazione nei cassetti, temendo di diventare folle. Ed è appunto Roithamer il protagonista del romanzo, il centro nevralgico e nevastenico che ingloba luoghi e persone con la sua presenza: precedente inquilino di quella soffitta, vi aveva soggiornato per portare a compimento - stipando nella sua testa ogni ragionamento e ogni proposito - la costruzione di un cono nel centro di una foresta (si noti il riferimento ironico a Heidegger) e in cui l'adorata sorella avrebbe dovuto abitare, ma che portò alla morte di entrambi.

Per creare il suo personaggio, Bernhard si è servito di alcuni elementi della vita di Wittgenstein, per lui fonte di ispirazione (non solo in questo capolavoro): l'essere austriaco come dato qualificante, lo studio e il lavoro Cambridge, l'arte di edificare come arte filosofica per eccellenza, la costruzione di una struttura destinata alla sorella.

Differenti invece sono le conclusioni cui arriva l'uno rispetto all'altro: Wittgenstein affermava l'impossibilità che tutto possa essere scientificamente espresso e metteva in evidenza, piuttosto, il valore-significato di ciò che non si può esprimere. Roithamer si rifiuta di arrivare a questa accettazione, spingendo al limite della sopportazione il proposito di costruire geometricamente l'esistenza: da qui l'ossessivo gesto/istinto della correzione infinita delle sue bozze, da qui la decisione di portare a termine il cono, il cui esito negativo si concretizza nel suicidio come finale correzione.

Nel silenzio, i tarli lavorano: le assi della soffitta di Holler scricchiolano, i cassetti si sbriciolano; gli assi del cono crollano sotto il peso del tarlo dell'anima.

“Esistenza in estinzione”.
Radura.

Florencia says

Dear Flor, because you read *The Book of Disquiet* and since you have nothing on your to-read shelf... I, Goodreads, recommend you this book.

reads summary; smiles; nods; wants this book, now

Maru Kun says

Found a Thomas Bernhard blog with loads of links to articles and criticism! Should be a lot of fun.

Scott Gates says

One of the things Bernhard's novels don't seem to have is an overall form, or imposed sense of organization, there are no chapter-like blocks for example, and along with this there is never a section within one of his novels that strikes out on a new path, rarely a part that reads fresher than the thousands of words preceding it, there is never a "new" section, or even a so-called paragraph, there is relentlessly and always never a new paragraph, a so-called new starting point, never the novel taking a strange turn that perhaps the reader hadn't foreseen, Bernhard never says Hang it all, and begins a new chapter, in fact there are no chapters, there aren't even paragraphs, there are no paragraph-like divisions between the sentences, there is never a given sentence that is tabbed five spaces to the right relative to the preceding sentences, his novels are one ruthless fixation on a given worldview with strictly confined interrelations between two, maybe three characters maximum, one of whom will likely be pursuing a vague so-called *scientific endeavor*, and one or more will have a *strange lung disease*, as many as one might be a sister who will compel one of the others to commit suicide, and more than one will take as a philosophical starting point that you must be absolutely alone and never go outside in order ever to attack a piece of work with maximum, to-the-exclusion-of-all-else effort, that is, you must ignore the innkeeper's wife who will show up in every one of Bernhard's novels, ignore the wretched Austrian town the characters live in, always the most repulsive town in Austria, Austria the most ruthlessly stupid country with the stupidest politics, always only the stupidest politics and stupidest people in Austria, a country that contains cretinism within its borders to an unheard-of degree, all of which must be ignored, particularly if you want to sit with a score of music, *relentlessly and only sit* with a score of music by

Schumann or Bach, and for hours study the score, needing not even to hear the music, reading the score better than listening to the music, listening to the music *worse* than reading the score, to sit in a chair and read the score, *to immerse yourself completely in the score to the exclusion of everything else*, before you go on to spend five hours at the minimum preparing your room so that you might be in the right state to write a review of one of Bernhard's novels or all of them it doesn't matter, might be able to attack the writing with *heedless energy* and *relentless will*, prepare everything just so, so that there are no crumbs on any table and no dirty socks on any piece of flooring, to pick up everything and organize everything, pick up and organize, pick up and organize, always to *pick up* everything and put it someplace else and always to *organize things* to construct the perfect environment for the utmost discipline for ruthlessly working on this piece of writing.

Eddie Watkins says

Lichtung

I posit that Roithamer would authorize this rewrite of his masterwork "*About Altensam and everything connected with Altensam, with special attention to the Cone*". Of course his ultimate correction of a correction of a correction, etc. would have been a blank page with only the *memory* of now non-existent verbiage, with heavy traces of extreme anguish, but my rewrite has the advantage of not only representing this blankness but of showing what that blankness represents, which is a clearing (*lichtung* in German), an ecstatic clearing of the mind and heart and soul at the moment of its final correction: its extinction.

Lee says

This is the novel Ben Marcus referred to in his contra-JFranz defense of difficulty in that Harper's essay. He says that according to a little function that used to be on Amazon.com, to read and comprehend Thomas Bernhard's "Correction" requires 355 years of education. Like all Bernhard, it's never really difficult reading -- it's more about endurance, this one more than any of the others because it's three or four times longer than any of the others. This one includes for example at least ten pages of repetitive ranting about how Austrians only excel at one thing, out of everything they could possibly excel at, the only thing they excel at is suicide. It goes on and on about how good Austrians are at suicide -- if this is your idea of a good time, if paragraphless rants that after about half a page become pretty hilarious before going on and on, saying the same thing in different ways, musically, wonderfully, over and over, if this is the sort of thing that turns you on, you have found a must read. This book also emphasizes a giant cone in the middle of a forest.
