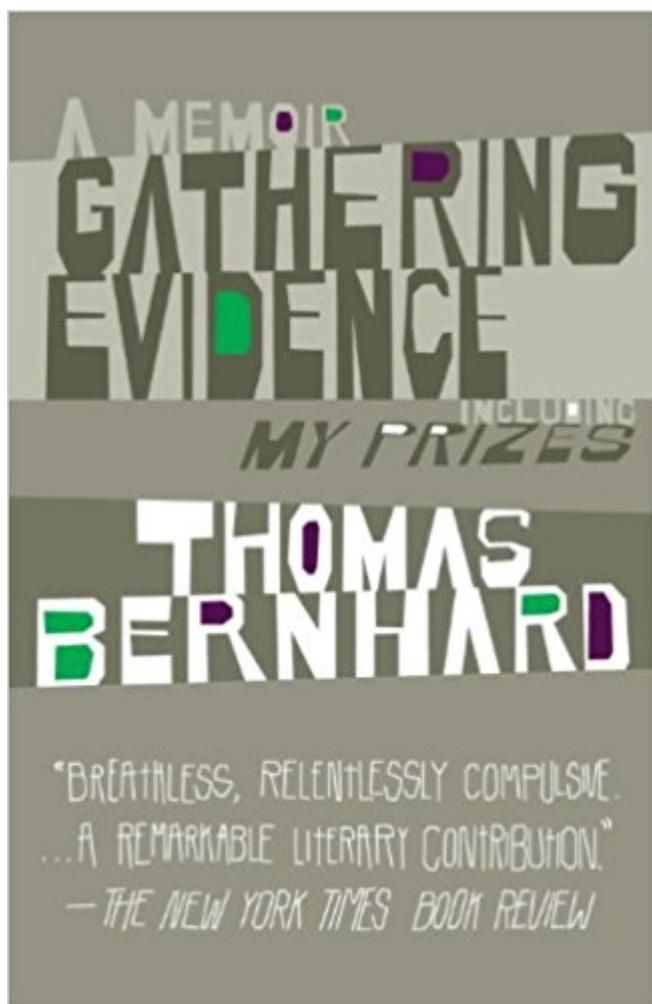


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Gathering Evidence & My Prizes: A Memoir (Vintage International)



Synopsis

Written with a dark pain and drama that recalls the novels of Dickens, *Gathering Evidence* is a powerful and compelling memoir of youth by one of the twentieth century's most gifted writers. Born in 1931, the illegitimate child of an abandoned mother, Thomas Bernhard was brought up by an eccentric grandmother and an adored grandfather in right-wing, Catholic Austria. He ran away from home at age fifteen. Three years later, he contracted pneumonia and was placed in a hospital ward for the old and terminally ill, where he observed first-hand "and with unflinching acuity" the cruel nature of protracted suffering and death. From the age of twenty-one, everything he wrote was shaped by the urgency of a dying man's testament "and where this account of his life ends, his art begins. Included in this edition is *My Prizes*, a collection of Bernhard's viciously funny and revelatory essays on his later literary life. Here is a portrait of the artist as a prize-winner: laconic, sardonic, shaking his head with biting amusement at the world and at himself.

Book Information

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Best Sellers Rank: #867,852 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #311 in Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Regional & Cultural > European > German #5242 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Arts & Literature > Authors

Customer Reviews

Thomas Bernhard is a wonderfully engaging author, although at first glance, a depressive. He is (or was - he died in 1989) Austrian, and this unusual autobiography is written in one long go - there are no chapters or even paragraphs! It is hard going at first, until you suddenly click into Bernhard's point of view, which is a grim, often tragic take, and some readers might consider his remarks on life, death, marriage, education (especially in Austria!) to be offensive. But since he is a master of irony, his life's sad and terrible situations do become very funny. At the age of 18, he was

hospitalised with pneumonia, and since the doctors thought he was going to die, he was put in a ward amongst the old and chronically ill, what he called the 'death' ward. Upon his recovery, he wasn't moved to another ward - the doctors, he said, seemed affronted that he hadn't 'gone under' as expected! On the daily round, he recounts how they grew progressively ruder, as his health improved. To Bernhard, doctors are marginally more criminal than teachers, but the greatest crime is that of parents who thoughtlessly "bring new human beings into the world," and then try to bring them up, in even more thoughtless ways. He went to a Catholic boarding-school until 1938, the year of the Anschluss, when of course it became a National Socialist school overnight - the great thing he writes is that there was no discernible difference - the brutally cruel school routine went on just the same, except there were different uniforms, beliefs, songs & decor!!

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