



The Thirtieth Year: Stories

Ingeborg Bachmann, Michael Bullock (Translator)

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This is collection of the stories written by a distinguished Austrian author who died in 1973. Reading these stories entails abandoning the terms of one's own comfort. The author's relentless vision demands that readers allows themselves to be hypnotised, taken over by her repetitive cadences and burning images of grief and loss. And yet, in the beauty of her images there is a tremendous affirmation of the world.

The Thirtieth Year: Stories Details

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Author : Ingeborg Bachmann , Michael Bullock (Translator)

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From Reader Review The Thirtieth Year: Stories for online ebook

Kobe Bryant says

Too dour

Christiane Alsop says

Love her short stories.

David says

Powerful short story collection. These are not neat, tidy little tales that comfort and amuse. They do not bring a wistful tear to the eye. Rather, they challenge and exhort and lament.

Bachmann is major. The entire collection is marvelous, but the four at the core are perfection: *Everything, Among Murderers and Madmen, A Step Towards Gomorrah, A Wildermuth*

This book has been tough to find, but according to the publisher it will be back in print this month (August 2012). Highly recommended.

Donia Al-Issa says

I read the short story *Everything* for my Masterpieces of German Literature class. Not interested in reading the rest of the short stories.

Everything is about a father who is excited to have his first born child. He wants this son to be exceptional, and to not mold into the usual life that every human lives. Once the son is born and is growing up, the father realizes that the boy isn't exceptional and becomes disappointed.

HuDa AliaNabi says

Elsie Doublé says

Some books you read at the right time.

David says

Ingeborg Bachmann was an Austrian writer, who died in 1973. I first read this collection of stories in 1978, while preparing for a German language exam at the Goethe Institute (the title story of the collection was part of the assigned reading list).

It's hard to describe the appeal of these stories. Often as not, the narrator is well-traveled, European, slightly world-weary, not particularly sympathetic, so that's not it. I suspect it's her exploration of themes such as the choices made by successful people, and the consequences of those choices, difficulties in communicating, questions of language and translation - topics that resonate with me for one reason or another. These stories are probably not for everyone, but I still return to this collection every few years.

I Am Vertical says

Scrittura Vortice

Ian says

The author, who died in 1973 at 46, is now considered one of the premier writers of post-war Germany. This collection of stories, first published in 1961 in German and in 1964 in an English translation by Michael Bullock, covers a range of ideas and themes, but converge in an intense battle of the sexes. Writing is lucid and forceful.

Vishy says

I have heard of Ingeborg Bachmann before, but I have never got around to reading her books. When one of my friends recommended her books highly, I thought I will read some of Bachmann's books.

The first book I read was '*The Thirtieth Year*'. It is a collection of short stories. It has seven short stories. Some of them are short, but most of them are around 30-40 pages. My favourite story was the title story '*The Thirtieth Year*'. It is about a man who turns thirty and looks back at his past life and remembers his old friends and enemies and the beautiful moments and love he had and the quarrels he got into. This man also thinks about the future and contemplates on what he should be doing with his life. That is all what the plot is about. It can be told in two sentences. It is also described as a short story. Well, who is dear Inge trying to fool? This is no ordinary short story. Well, scratch out that adjective 'ordinary'. That sentence should read

‘This is no short story’. I find it extremely difficult to describe what this beautiful piece of art is. The best I can come up with is that it is concentrated, exquisite poetry with profound philosophical insights which looks deceptively like a short story. I don’t know how Ingeborg Bachmann managed to pull that off, but she has. The first paragraph of the story grabs your attention – cunning Inge doesn’t miss that first paragraph trick :

When a person enters his thirtieth year people will not stop calling him young. But he himself, although he can discover no changes in himself, becomes unsure; he feels as though he were no longer entitled to claim to be young. And one morning he wakes up, on a day which he will forget, and suddenly lies there unable to get up, struck by harsh rays of light and denuded of every weapon and all courage with which to face the new day...

and the story doesn’t let you go till the end. I found beautiful, deep insights in every page and my highlighting pen was working nonstop. If you don’t believe me, check out these passages, some of my favourite ones.

He will free himself from the people who surround him and if possible he will not go to new ones. He can no longer live among people. They paralyse him, they have explained him according to their own judgment. As soon as a man stays some time in one place he is transmuted into too many shapes, hearsay shapes, and has less and less right to appeal to his own self. Therefore he wishes, henceforth and for ever, to appear in his true shape. He cannot start this here, where he has been living for a long time; but he will do it there, where he will be free.

Why have I spent a whole summer trying to destroy myself in intoxication or to intensify my feelings in intoxication? – Only to avoid becoming aware that I am an abandoned instrument upon which someone, a long time ago, struck a few notes on which I helplessly produce variations, out of which I try furiously to make a piece of sound that bears my handwriting. My handwriting! As if it were important for something to bear my handwriting! Flashes of lightning have passed through trees and split them. Madness has come upon men and inwardly broken them in pieces. Swarms of locusts have descended upon the fields and left the trail of their devouring. Floods have devastated hills and torrents the mountainsides. Earthquakes have not ceased. These are handwritings, the only ones.

He has spent so many useless hours with other people, and although he made no use of the hours now either, he did bend them towards him and sniff at them. He came to enjoy time; its taste was pure and good.

Today he was another man. He felt good only when he was alone, he no longer made demands, demolished the edifice of his wishes, gave up his hopes and became simpler day by day. He began to think humbly of the world. He sought a duty, he wanted to serve. To plant a tree. To procreate a child. Is that modest enough? Is that simple enough?

Love was unbearable. It expected nothing, demanded nothing and gave nothing. It did not allow itself to be fenced in, cultivated and planted with feelings, but stepped over all boundaries and smashed down all feelings.

Men do not love freedom. Wherever it has come into being they have quarrelled with it. I love freedom which I too must betray a thousand times over. This unworthy world is the result of the uninterrupted spurning of freedom.

Did you like them?

My second favourite story or stories rather – there are two actually and I liked both of them equally well – were ‘*A Step Towards Gomorrah*’ and ‘*A Wildermuth*’.

Looking at the title, you would have guessed what ‘*A Step Towards Gomorrah*’ was about. It is about a happily married musician Charlotte, who during the course of an evening, finds herself attracted towards another woman, an attraction which throws light on her present life. Though she is happily married, this new found attraction promises something which will satisfy a deep yearning in her heart and change her life in a profoundly beautiful way. Well, but that is the beauty of a magical evening – there is so much of promise, but when we get up the next morning we have to get back to our mundane life. And Charlotte has to pick up her husband at the railway station the next day morning. Does she or doesn’t she? Does she accept her present mundane life and chug along or does she allow the evening’s promise to flower? You have to read the story to find out. My favourite lines from the story were these :

The arrogance to insist on her own unhappiness, her own loneliness, had always been in her, but only now did it venture to emerge; it blossomed, ran wild, smothered her. She was unredeemable and nobody should have the effrontery to redeem her...

‘*A Wildermuth*’ is about a judge who tries to find the truth about everything, starting with the cases which come up before him in court. The first part of the story talks about a case which is being argued in his court. Towards the end of the hearing, the judge gets up and starts shouting ‘*Stop telling the truth*’ or something similar. The second part of the story is told in the first person from the judge’s perspective and it describes how his fascination for the truth started and how it all ended up with his saying ‘*Stop telling the truth*’. The first part of the story reads like a legal thriller and we hope that there will be twists and turns and we also hope that the person who is charged for murder is really innocent or he has really good reasons for committing the murder. Things don’t turn out that way though. The second part of the story is a philosophical meditation on the nature of truth and whether it can be really ascertained. The judge’s point of view, at the end of the story, is presented in these passages :

Yes, what then is the truth about myself, about anyone? The truth can be defined only in respect of point-like, minute moments of action, steps in the process of feeling, the most minute steps, about one drop after another out of the thought stream. But then it would no longer be possible to deduce that a person had such massive characteristics as ‘thrifty’, ‘good-natured’, ‘cowardly’, ‘thoughtless’. All the thousand thousandths of a second of liking, desire, aversion, calm, agitation that one passes through – what can be deduced from them? One thing only : that a man has done much and suffered much...

...why...must we tell the truth, my friends? Why should we in fact choose this damned truth? So that we should not slip into lies, for lies are human handiwork and the truth is only half human handiwork, for there must be something on the other side – where the facts are – to correspond to it. There must first be something on the other side for a truth to exist. It cannot exist alone.

I’m after the truth. But the further after it I go the further away it is, flickering like a will-o’-the-wisp at all times, at all places, over every object. As though it were only tangible, as though it only had solidity, if one doesn’t move, doesn’t ask many questions, rests content with the crudest facts. It must be set for medium temperatures, medium looks, medium words. Then the result is a continual cheap agreement between object and word, feeling and word, deed and word. The well brought up word that is forced to accept this mute world of buttons and hearts with compassion. Indolent, apathetic word set on agreement at all costs. And beyond this there are nothing but opinions, slick assertions, opinions about opinions and an opinion about the truth that is worse than the opinions about all truths...

I also liked the story '*Everything*' which is about a man who wants his son to be different in a fundamental way when compared to other children but when his son turns out like everyone else he stops loving his son. (My summary is inadequate though – this is not exactly what happens, as what happens in the story is more complex than that. That is also one of the themes of this story – the inadequacy of language.) As the narrator describes it :

It was all the same to me whether Fipps went to the grammar school later or not, whether he developed into something worthwhile or not. A worker wants to see his son a doctor, a doctor wants to see his son at least a doctor. I don't understand that. I didn't want Fipps to become either cleverer or better than us. Nor did I want to be loved by him; there was no need for him to obey me, no need for him to bend to my will. No, I wanted... I only wanted him to begin from the beginning, to show me with a single gesture that he didn't have to reflect our gestures. I didn't see anything new in him. I was newborn, but he wasn't! It was I, yes, I was the first man and had gambled everything away, and done nothing!

The other stories in the book were interesting too. '*Undine Goes*' is about a mermaid / water nymph who reveals her own perspective on human beings – on how humans do terrible things but are also endlessly fascinating and how it is very difficult to resist loving them. '*Among Murderers and Madmen*' is about a few people who were on opposite sides during the war (the Second World War) – some were part of the persecuting side and the others were part of the persecuted side – now sit on the same table as friends and have dinner and the consequences of that. In '*Youth in an Austrian Town*', the narrator looks back at his childhood in an Austrian town, when dramatic things were afoot and things changed irrevocably. This story had one of my favourite first sentences – it was actually the second sentence, but I am taking poetic licence here :

"The first tree... is so ablaze with autumn, such an immense patch of gold, that it looks like a torch dropped by an angel."

When I read that sentence, I knew that I was going to love the rest of the book. I was not wrong.

One of the recurring themes across the stories is the inadequacy of language, on how language is imperfect and approximate and how it obscures more than it reveals while trying to describe people, places, events, things, feelings, the atmosphere of a time and place and how we try to be more and more precise and use new words in different layers to describe old ones so that the core meaning at the centre could be revealed. And how we often end up making things more obscure than when we started. It made me think about what Philip Larkin once said about a good poem (as described in the book "*It must be Beautiful*") :

A good poem is like an onion. On the outside, both are pleasingly smooth and intriguing, and they become more and more so, as their successive layers of meaning are revealed. His aim was to write the perfect onion.

I can't resist comparing Ingeborg Bachmann with one of my favourite writers Marlen Haushofer, because both of them are Austrian and both of them had parallel careers. (Bachmann was, of course, more famous of the two in her life time.) The main difference between them, which jumps at me, is this. While reading a Marlen Haushofer novel one gets a feeling that one is talking to one's mother or one's favourite aunt and hearing family stories of the past. There is a lot of warmth and love in that conversation. While reading an Ingeborg Bachmann book, the experience is different. It is like having an intellectual conversation with a philosopher who shares her profound insights on the human condition. It is probably because of their backgrounds – Haushofer studied literature and was a homemaker and a writer while Bachmann studied philosophy and was an academic and a writer. Both so different and both such a pleasure to read.

Though Ingeborg Bachmann was a renowned writer in her time, she wrote only a few books. I could find only seven of them in English translation – two collections of short stories, one novel, one collection of two novel fragments, one collection of poetry (published as two different collections, originally), a collection of letters that she and Paul Celan wrote to each other and a war diary. I want to read all of them some day.

The edition of '*The Thirtieth Year*' I read has a wonderful introduction by Karen Achberger which gives an overview of Ingeborg Bachmann's life and her work and also discusses all the stories in the book and the themes they explore.

I think you know this already, but I have to say it nevertheless. I loved Ingeborg Bachmann's '*The Thirtieth Year*'. It is a wonderful piece of poetry in prose which conveys lyrical impressions of people and places and reveals philosophical insights into the human condition. I can't wait to read my next Bachmann book.

Have you read '*The Thirtieth Year*' or any other book by Ingeborg Bachmann?

Jacqueline says

In Norwegian. Translated by Gerd Høst og Åse-Marie Nesse.

una_sussa says

La Bachmann può essere considerata un alter ego femminile di Thomas Bernhard: linguaggio e disperazione, meditazione ontologica portata all'estremo. A onor del vero e in una visione più ampia, buona parte della letteratura austriaca degli anni '50 è infatti profondamente legata alla filosofia post-moderna.

Tornando alla Bachmann, poetessa di spicco del Gruppo 47, in questo volume ha sperimentato con successo una prosa di sofferenza e tensione esistenziale.

"Speranza: spero che non s' avveri nulla di ciò che spero."

Sema says

bu kitab? bitirdi?imde akl?ma hemen ?u cümle geldi: "hayat?n anlam?n? ingeborg bachmann"?n kaynakç? öyküsü ile buluyor isem, ben de bir 'kaynakç?' de?il miyim?"

herkesin "kaynakç?" azmine ula?mas? dile?i ile. herkesin masan?n alt?nda hayat?n? de?i?tirecek bir kitap bulmas? dile?i ile...

dipnot: doktorlardan zaten hep nefret etmi?imdir.

Wm says

The first two stories are stunning and haunting. The others are less so, although still interesting. So read the title story and "Youth in an Austrian Town" and sample the others and read them if they strike your fancy.

I suspect all of the stories may work much better in German.

Maab says

????? says

mwpm says

The Thirtieth Year is a collection of short stories, including: "Youth in an Austrian Town", "The Thirtieth Year", "Everything", "Among Murderers and Madmen", "A Step Toward Gomorrah", "A Wildermuth", and

"Undine Goes".

Alexandra says

Ich mag Bachmanns Sprachbulierkunst, fast alle Geschichten waren aber derartig langweilig und über total nutzlose Figuren, die sich einen Wolf schwafeln über total sinnlose Dinge, die kein Schwein interessieren. Das beginnt beim Dreißigsten Jahr Ich bin grad 50 geworden und meine Midlifecrisis ist ein Lercherlschas gegen die Quarterlifecrisis des Protagonisten - nicht auszuhalten dieses Gewinsel - da wünscht man sich, dass ihm endlich was passiert, damit er einen Grund hat zu lamentieren, und zack ist er da der Autounfall - leider erwischt den anderen. Dem Tode entronnen, entdeckt er nach Monaten der Rekonvaleszenz ein weißes Haar - was für ein lächerliches Drama, nicht mal der Erwähnung wert. Hat dieser Mehlwurm von einem Mann keine anderen Probleme?"

Die Geschichte des Mannes der sein Kind nicht annehmen konnte, ist sosolala nicht ganz so unspannend wie alle anderen, die vom Richter, der über Wahrheit schwafelt, ist auf jeden Fall die perfekte Medikation gegen Schlafstörungen und zwei andere sind nicht der Rede wert.

Lediglich die Kurzgeschichte Unter Mörtern und Irren ist grandios. Nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg sitzen Täter und Opfer wieder an einem Tisch in einem Gasthaus. Sie sind voneinander abhängig und geschäftlich miteinander verflochten - die Täter haben es wieder zu was gebracht. Grandiose Beschreibung des Nachkriegsösterreich und wie die Juden mit der laschen Entnazifizierung umgingen.

Fazit: Schöne Sprache aber die Geschichten, die Bachmann erzählt, sind fast nicht der Rede wert. Komisch, dass sie auch so oft das Innenleben von Männern beleuchten und den Kern von männlichen Archetypen festnageln wollte. Das hätte sie als Frau vielleicht lassen sollen, denn es ist ihr meiner Meinung nach überhaupt nicht gelungen.

Teresa Proença says

— O dia-a-dia das crianças numa cidade em guerra...

"Podem esquecer o latim e começar a aprender a distinguir os ruídos dos motores no céu. Já não têm de se lavar frequentemente; ninguém se preocupa já com as suas unhas sujas."

— Quando, por vezes, é necessário ver a morte na frente para se valorizar a vida e sossegar das angústias existenciais...

"levanta-te e caminha! Não tens nenhum osso partido."

— A impotência de um pai para impedir que o filho se converta em mais um elemento, igual a todos, de uma sociedade de pessoas infelizes...

"Eu poderia poupar-lhe a culpabilidade, o amor e toda a fatalidade, e libertá-lo para uma outra vida." e a destruição que a perda de um filho provoca num casal e na mente de cada um dos pais...

"Quando nos sentamos como duas personagens petrificadas à mesa, sinto a nossa tristeza como um arco que vai de uma ponta à outra do mundo — de Hanna a mim — e que nesse arco retesado está preparada uma seta, pronta a atingir o céu imóvel em pleno coração."

— Charlotte tem um casamento sólido sustentado *"pela bondade, pela benevolência, pelo apoio, segurança, protecção, fidelidade, toda uma série de coisas respeitáveis que ajudavam a viver."* No dia em que Mara a tenta seduzir, Charlotte entra em luta consigo própria e questiona as suas escolhas...

— Desde criança que o juiz Wildermuth é um defensor da Verdade, a qual procurou durante toda a sua vida. Até ao dia em que num julgamento de um crime simples, cuja prova da verdade era um botão de casaco, tem um colapso ao aperceber-se que persegue uma quimera...

"Ah tu, palavra bem domesticada que caridosamente te encarregas deste mundo de botões e corações!"

Palavra pacata, apática, pronta à concordância em qualquer utilização.

E para além disso acabam por existir só opiniões, afirmações ousadas, opiniões sobre opiniões e uma opinião sobre a verdade pior do que todas as opiniões sobre todas as verdades, pela qual tu por vezes podes ser encostado à parede ou condenado à fogueira, pois que, sendo a opinião em si já tão terrível, quanto o não será mais a verdade."

São estes alguns dos temas dos sete contos intitulados:

Juventude Numa Cidade Austríaca

Trinta Anos

Tudo

Entre Assassinos E Loucos

A Um Passo De Gomorra

A Verdade

O Adeus De Ondina

e que vão muito além das histórias e personagens.

=====

*"Sob um céu estranho
sombras rosas
sombras
numa terra estranha
entre rosas e sombras
numa água estranha
a minha sombra"*

— **Ingeborg Bachmann** (poema do livro "O Tema Aprazado")

Ingeborg Bachmann nasceu em Klagenfurt, **Áustria**, no dia 25 de Junho de 1926 e morreu em Roma, Itália, no dia 17 de Outubro de 1973.

Doutorada em Filosofia, iniciou a sua carreira literária com a poesia, abandonando-a mais tarde dedicando-se à prosa, na qual abordava temas sociais. Teve um relacionamento amoroso com Paul Celan que influenciou a expressão poética de ambos.

Morreu aos 47 anos devido a graves queimaduras resultantes de um incêndio, que deflagrou no quarto do hotel em que estava hospedada, que se supõe ter tido origem num cigarro não apagado.

Seyhan says

i am just in love with hers words and my fav Bachmann book

