

robert walser jakob von gunten

Robert Walser Jakob von Gunten: Exploring the Enigmatic Novel and Its Enduring Charm

robert walser jakob von gunten is a phrase that immediately transports literature enthusiasts to the delicate world of early 20th-century Swiss writing. Robert Walser, a Swiss writer renowned for his subtle and poetic prose, crafted "Jakob von Gunten" as one of his most celebrated works. This novel offers readers an intimate glimpse into the life of a young man navigating the peculiar confines of a boarding school for servants, all while exploring themes of identity, submission, and societal roles. In this article, we'll delve deep into the essence of "Jakob von Gunten," its significance in Walser's oeuvre, and why it continues to captivate readers and scholars alike.

Who Was Robert Walser?

Before diving into "Jakob von Gunten," understanding its author provides valuable context. Robert Walser (1878–1956) was a Swiss writer known for his unique narrative style — delicate, introspective, and often tinged with whimsy and melancholy. His works were somewhat overlooked during his lifetime but have since been recognized for their influence on modernist literature. Walser's writing often focuses on the inner workings of his characters' minds, blending simplicity with profound philosophical undertones.

Walser's Literary Style and Themes

Walser's prose is characterized by a gentle, conversational tone and an acute observation of everyday life. His themes often revolve around:

- The tension between individuality and social conformity
- The nuances of human relationships
- The exploration of identity and selfhood
- The subtle critique of societal structures

These elements are vividly present in "Jakob von Gunten," making it not only a story about a young man but also a meditation on the human condition.

Understanding "Jakob von Gunten": The Novel and Its Plot

"Jakob von Gunten," published in 1909, is a novel that defies conventional storytelling. It tells the tale of Jakob, a young man who enrolls in the Benjamenta Institute, a peculiar school dedicated to training servants. The novel is written in the first person, giving readers an intimate look at Jakob's thoughts and experiences.

The Setting: Benjamenta Institute

The Benjamenta Institute is more than just a boarding school; it's a microcosm of societal hierarchy and obedience. Here, students are taught to suppress their individuality and embrace subservience, a concept that Walser uses to explore broader social dynamics. The school's rigid structure contrasts with Jakob's introspective nature, creating an intriguing tension throughout the narrative.

Jakob's Journey and Themes

Jakob's journey is less about external achievements and more about internal discovery. Throughout the novel, he grapples with:

- The desire for freedom versus the allure of submission
- The role of power and control in human relationships
- The search for meaning within restrictive environments

Walser's portrayal of Jakob challenges readers to question traditional notions of strength and autonomy. The novel suggests that there is dignity in submission and that societal roles are fluid and complex.

The Significance of "Jakob von Gunten" in Literature

Though "Jakob von Gunten" was not widely recognized during Walser's lifetime, it has since gained acclaim for its innovative narrative and philosophical depth. The novel is often cited as a precursor to existentialist literature and has influenced numerous writers, including Franz Kafka and Walter Benjamin.

Exploring the Novel's Modernist Elements

"Jakob von Gunten" embodies many modernist qualities, such as:

- Fragmented narrative structure
- Focus on the subjective experience
- Exploration of alienation and identity

These features contribute to the novel's timeless appeal and its relevance to contemporary discussions on individuality and societal expectations.

Robert Walser's Influence on Contemporary Literature

Walser's subtle style and themes resonated with later writers who sought to explore the complexities of human psychology. His influence can be seen in:

- The works of Kafka, with their focus on bureaucratic absurdity and alienation
- Postmodern literature's interest in unreliable narrators and fragmented realities
- Contemporary Swiss literature's introspective and minimalist tendencies

"Jakob von Gunten" stands as a testament to Walser's literary legacy and his contribution to shaping modern narrative forms.

Why "Jakob von Gunten" Remains Relevant Today

In an age where questions of identity, power, and societal roles are more pertinent than ever, "Jakob von Gunten" offers profound insights wrapped in deceptively simple prose. Its themes resonate with readers facing the pressures of conformity and the search for self-expression.

Lessons from Jakob's Story

Jakob's experience encourages readers to reflect on:

- The balance between individuality and community
- The nature of power dynamics in everyday life
- The value of empathy and understanding in hierarchical relationships

These timeless lessons make the novel a valuable read for anyone interested in philosophy, psychology, or social studies.

Reading Tips for "Jakob von Gunten"

For those approaching the novel for the first time, here are some helpful tips:

1. ****Read slowly and thoughtfully:**** Walser's prose invites reflection rather than quick consumption.
2. ****Focus on the internal narrative:**** The novel's power lies in Jakob's introspective observations.
3. ****Consider the historical context:**** Understanding early 20th-century European society can deepen appreciation.
4. ****Explore secondary literature:**** Critical essays and analyses can offer additional perspectives.

Approaching "Jakob von Gunten" with patience and curiosity enhances the reading

experience.

Translations and Availability

Thanks to increased interest in Robert Walser's work, "Jakob von Gunten" is now widely available in various languages. Translations strive to preserve the novel's delicate tone and nuanced meaning, although some of Walser's subtle humor and stylistic quirks can be challenging to render.

Recommended Editions

- The English translation by Susan Bernofsky is highly praised for its fidelity and readability.
- Annotated editions provide helpful background and commentary.
- Audiobook versions offer a different way to experience Walser's lyrical prose.

Choosing the right edition can significantly influence one's engagement with the novel.

Final Thoughts on Robert Walser's "Jakob von Gunten"

While "Jakob von Gunten" may seem modest in scope, its exploration of the human psyche and social structures offers rich material for contemplation. Robert Walser's masterful blend of simplicity and depth invites readers into a quietly profound world where submission and individuality intertwine. Whether you are a seasoned literary scholar or a curious reader, this novel promises a rewarding journey into one of modern literature's most intriguing works.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is Robert Walser in relation to 'Jakob von Gunten'?

Robert Walser is the Swiss author who wrote the novel 'Jakob von Gunten,' first published in 1909.

What is the main theme of Robert Walser's 'Jakob von Gunten'?

'Jakob von Gunten' explores themes of individuality, obedience, and the struggle for identity within oppressive social structures, particularly through the setting of a peculiar institute for servants.

What is the plot of 'Jakob von Gunten' by Robert Walser?

The novel follows Jakob von Gunten, a young man who enrolls in the Benjamenta Institute, a school for servants, where he experiences strict discipline and reflects on his desire for freedom and self-understanding.

How does 'Jakob von Gunten' reflect Robert Walser's writing style?

The novel showcases Walser's delicate, introspective prose and his focus on the inner life of characters, blending simplicity with philosophical depth and a subtle critique of social norms.

What is the significance of the Benjamenta Institute in 'Jakob von Gunten'?

The Benjamenta Institute serves as a microcosm of societal hierarchy and control, highlighting themes of submission, power, and the search for personal autonomy in Walser's novel.

Has 'Jakob von Gunten' been adapted into other media?

Yes, 'Jakob von Gunten' has been adapted into films and stage plays, reflecting its enduring influence and the universal relevance of its themes.

What influence did Robert Walser's life have on 'Jakob von Gunten'?

Walser's own experiences with mental illness, social alienation, and his interest in marginal characters deeply influenced the novel's tone and exploration of individuality and conformity.

Why is 'Jakob von Gunten' considered a significant work in modernist literature?

The novel's experimental narrative style, focus on psychological depth, and critique of societal structures align it with modernist concerns, making it a notable contribution to early 20th-century literature.

Where can readers find English translations of 'Jakob von Gunten'?

English translations of 'Jakob von Gunten' are available through various publishers, including New York Review Books Classics, making the novel accessible to a broad audience.

Additional Resources

Robert Walser Jakob von Gunten: An In-Depth Literary Examination

robert walser jakob von gunten is a phrase that resonates deeply within the corridors of early 20th-century European literature. It refers to one of Robert Walser's most enigmatic and compelling works, **Jakob von Gunten**, a novel that defies conventional narrative structures and invites readers into a surreal exploration of identity, power, and submission. As a Swiss writer whose influence spans across modernist literature, Walser's **Jakob von Gunten** stands as a testament to his unique narrative style and philosophical inquiry, making it a subject of interest for literary scholars, critics, and readers alike.

Understanding Robert Walser and the Context of Jakob von Gunten

Robert Walser (1878–1956) was a Swiss writer whose body of work, though not immediately acclaimed during his lifetime, gained significant traction posthumously. Known for his delicate, nuanced prose and his ability to blend the mundane with the fantastical, Walser's writing often grapples with themes of alienation, social hierarchy, and the human psyche. **Jakob von Gunten**, published in 1909, is arguably his most famous novel and encapsulates these motifs through the story of its titular character.

Set in the confines of the Benjamenta Institute, a peculiar school dedicated to training servants, the novel explores Jakob's decision to enroll in the institute as a means of escaping societal expectations. This premise serves as a backdrop for a philosophical meditation on servitude, freedom, and self-identity. The novel's setting and tone blur the lines between satire and sincerity, creating a complex narrative that challenges readers to reconsider traditional power dynamics.

Plot Overview and Narrative Style

At its core, **Jakob von Gunten** follows the experiences of Jakob, a young man who voluntarily enters the institute where students are taught to become subservient. The narrative unfolds largely through Jakob's introspective diary entries, providing a first-person perspective that is both intimate and unreliable. This diary format allows Walser to experiment with narrative voice, blending irony with earnestness.

The story's progression is less about external action and more about Jakob's internal reflections and observations of the institute's peculiar social order. The interactions between Jakob, his peers, and the enigmatic headmasters reveal a microcosm of society's rigid hierarchies, highlighting the absurdity and complexity of submission as a form of resistance or self-expression.

Thematic Exploration in Jakob von Gunten

The themes embedded in **Jakob von Gunten** are multifaceted, intertwining psychological, philosophical, and social elements. Understanding these themes is crucial for appreciating the novel's enduring significance.

Servitude and Power Dynamics

One of the most prominent themes in **Jakob von Gunten** is the exploration of servitude—not just as a social position but as a philosophical concept. Jakob's voluntary submission to the institute's regime raises questions about the nature of freedom and authority. Is servitude inherently degrading, or can it be a chosen path to self-realization? Walser's portrayal of the Benjamenta Institute as both oppressive and strangely liberating complicates traditional notions of power.

This dynamic invites readers to scrutinize the societal roles and expectations that define individuals' lives. The novel suggests that power is not merely about dominance but also about the willingness to accept one's position within a hierarchy, sometimes even finding empowerment in submission.

Identity and Self-Perception

Jakob's journey is also a profound exploration of identity. His diary entries reveal a character who is simultaneously self-effacing and self-aware, navigating the tensions between individuality and conformity. The institute serves as a crucible where Jakob's sense of self is both suppressed and forged, raising questions about how identity is shaped by external structures.

Walser's depiction of Jakob's internal struggles resonates with broader existential inquiries prevalent in modernist literature, positioning the novel as a precursor to later explorations of fragmented identity and psychological complexity.

Absurdity and Irony

The novel's tone oscillates between earnestness and irony, creating a sense of absurdity that permeates the narrative. The peculiar rules and rituals of the Benjamenta Institute, combined with Jakob's often deadpan observations, evoke a Kafkaesque atmosphere. This absurdity serves to critique rigid social systems and the mechanization of human relations.

Walser's use of irony is subtle yet pervasive, inviting readers to question the sincerity of Jakob's submission and the legitimacy of the institute's authority. This duality enriches the text's interpretive possibilities, allowing for multiple readings.

Literary Significance and Influence

Jakob von Gunten occupies a unique space within Robert Walser's oeuvre and the broader landscape of European literature. Its innovative narrative techniques and thematic depth have garnered attention from literary critics and influenced numerous writers.

Modernist Techniques and Style

Walser's style in **Jakob von Gunten** is characterized by its minimalism, fragmented narrative, and focus on internal monologue. These features align the novel with early modernist experimentation, predating and, in some respects, anticipating the works of Franz Kafka and Samuel Beckett. The novel's sparse prose and elliptical storytelling challenge readers to engage actively with the text, piecing together meaning from subtle cues.

The diary format also enhances the novel's introspective quality, providing a window into Jakob's psyche that is both intimate and enigmatic. Walser's linguistic precision and understated humor contribute to a distinctive narrative voice that has been lauded for its originality.

Comparative Context: Jakob von Gunten and Kafka

Comparisons between Robert Walser's **Jakob von Gunten** and Franz Kafka's works are inevitable, given their thematic and stylistic affinities. Both authors explore alienation, bureaucratic absurdity, and the struggle for identity within oppressive systems. However, Walser's approach tends to be more whimsical and less overtly nightmarish than Kafka's.

While Kafka's protagonists often face incomprehensible and hostile forces, Jakob's submission appears more voluntary and reflective. This distinction adds nuance to the discourse on power and autonomy in early 20th-century literature, positioning **Jakob von Gunten** as a complementary counterpart to Kafka's narratives.

Critical Reception and Legacy

Although Robert Walser did not achieve widespread fame during his lifetime, **Jakob von Gunten** has since been recognized as a seminal work. Scholars appreciate the novel's layered complexity and its contribution to modernist literature, with many highlighting Walser's innovative narrative strategies.

Pros and Cons of Jakob von Gunten's Narrative

Approach

- **Pros:** The novel's introspective style allows for deep psychological insight and philosophical meditation. Its unique blend of irony and sincerity offers a rich interpretive landscape. The diary format enhances intimacy and immediacy.
- **Cons:** The lack of conventional plot progression may challenge readers accustomed to more action-driven narratives. The ambiguous tone can lead to interpretive uncertainty, potentially alienating those seeking clear moral or thematic resolutions.

Despite these challenges, **Jakob von Gunten** continues to attract readers interested in experimental literature and the exploration of existential themes.

Contemporary Reappraisals

In recent decades, **Jakob von Gunten** has experienced a resurgence in popularity, aided by new translations and critical studies. Contemporary readers and academics often view the novel through lenses such as queer theory, post-structuralism, and psychoanalytic criticism, uncovering fresh insights into its treatment of identity and power.

The novel's relevance extends beyond literary circles, offering reflections on social conformity and the human condition that resonate in today's complex cultural landscape.

In sum, Robert Walser's **Jakob von Gunten** remains a compelling and thought-provoking work that challenges readers to reconsider the boundaries between freedom and servitude, individuality and submission. Its enduring appeal lies in its subtle intricacy and the profound questions it raises about the human experience.

Robert Walser Jakob Von Gunten

robert walser jakob von gunten: Jakob Von Gunten Robert Walser, 1969 Jakob von Gunten is a student at a school which teaches how to become servants and butlers.

robert walser jakob von gunten: Franz Kafka's Amerika and Robert Walser's Jakob Von Gunten Norbert J. Collins, 1976

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robert walser jakob von gunten: *The narrative structure in Robert Walser's Geschwister Tanner, Der Gehülfe, Jakob von Gunten* Herbert L. Kaufman, 1969

robert walser jakob von gunten: Selected Stories Robert Walser, 1982 A writer who devoted loving attention to the smallest things and the most fugitive of feelings, Robert Walser influenced writers as diverse as Franz Kafka and W. G. Sebald. *Selected Stories* collects 42 of Walsers works, including *The Walk*, which according to Time belongs on any short list of great 20th-century stories. If [Walser] had a hundred thousand readers, the world would be a better place. Hermann Hesse Copyright © Libri GmbH. All rights reserved.

robert walser jakob von gunten: The German Pícaro and Modernity Bernhard Malkmus, 2014-03-13 The German Pícaro and Modernity reads the re-emergence of the picaresque narrative in twentieth-century German-language writing as an expression of modernity and its social imaginaries. Malkmus argues that the picaresque, whose origins date back to the Spanish Renaissance and the Baroque Age, re-emerged as a reflection both of Germany's explosive modernizing processes between 1880 and 1930 and of the most barbarous implosion of modern civilization under National Socialism. Another reason for the fertility of this literary form at that particular cultural moment is rooted in the complexities of German-Jewish relations and the history of Jewish assimilation in central Europe. A considerable number of authors who used the picaresque form in the twentieth century are from a Jewish background, and Malkmus demonstrates how the picaresque narrative template also offers a medium for German-Jewish self-reflection. In highlighting these connections, he contributes not only to scholarship in European literature, but also but also to our understanding of major social, economic and political issues at stake in modernity

robert walser jakob von gunten: The Assistant Robert Walser, 2013-07-25 *The Assistant* by Robert Walser—who was admired greatly by Kafka, Musil, Walter Benjamin, and W. G. Sebald—is now presented in English for the very first time. Robert Walser is an overwhelmingly original author with many ardent fans: J.M. Coetzee (dazzling), Guy Davenport (a very special kind of whimsical-serious-deep writer), and Hermann Hesse (If he had a hundred thousand readers, the world would be a better place). Charged with compassion, and an utterly unique radiance of vision, Walser is as Susan Sontag exclaimed a truly wonderful, heart-breaking writer. *The Assistant* is his breathtaking 1908 novel, translated by award-winning translator Susan Bernofsky. Joseph, hired to become an inventor's new assistant, arrives one rainy Monday morning at Technical Engineer Karl Tobler's splendid hilltop villa: he is at once pleased and terribly worried, a state soon followed by even stickier psychological complexities. He enjoys the beautiful view over Lake Zurich, in the company of the proud wife, Frau Tobler, and the delicious savory meals. But does he deserve any of these pleasures? *The Assistant* chronicles Joseph's inner life of cascading emotions as he attempts, both frantically and light-heartedly, to help the Tobler household, even as it slides toward financial ruin. Tobler demands of Joseph, Do you have your wits about you?! And Joseph's wits are in fact all around him, trembling like leaves in the breeze—he is full of exuberance and despair, all the raptures and panics of a person drowning in obedience.

robert walser jakob von gunten: "Masquerade" and Other Stories Robert Walser, 1990-02 From 1899 until he was misdiagnosed as a schizophrenic and hospitalized in 1933, Walser produced nine novels and more than 1,000 short stories and prose pieces. This collection offers a representative selection of Walser's work, from his first published fiction to the stately prose of the last years before he vanished forever behind the asylum walls.

robert walser jakob von gunten: Jakob von Gunten Robert Walser, 2014-03-05 The Swiss writer Robert Walser is one of the quiet geniuses of twentieth-century literature. Largely self-taught and altogether indifferent to worldly success, Walser wrote a range of short stories, essays, as well as four novels, of which *Jakob von Gunten* is widely recognized as the finest. The book is a young man's inquisitive and irreverent account of life in what turns out to be the most uncanny of schools. It is the work of an outsider artist, a writer of uncompromising originality and disconcerting humor, whose beautiful sentences have the simplicity and strangeness of a painting by Henri Rousseau.

robert walser jakob von gunten: *Berlin Stories* Robert Walser, 2012-01-24 A New York Review Books Original In 1905 the young Swiss writer Robert Walser arrived in Berlin to join his older brother Karl, already an important stage-set designer, and immediately threw himself into the vibrant social and cultural life of the city. *Berlin Stories* collects his alternately celebratory, droll, and satirical observations on every aspect of the bustling German capital, from its theaters, cabarets, painters' galleries, and literary salons, to the metropolitan street, markets, the Tiergarten, rapid-service restaurants, and the electric tram. Originally appearing in literary magazines as well as the feuilleton sections of newspapers, the early stories are characterized by a joyous urgency and the generosity of an unconventional guide. Later pieces take the form of more personal reflections on the writing process, memories, and character studies. All are full of counter-intuitive images and vignettes of startling clarity, showcasing a unique talent for whom no detail was trivial, at grips with a city diving headlong into modernity.

robert walser jakob von gunten: *Speaking To The Rose* Robert Walser, 2005-01-01 The Swiss writer of whom Hermann Hesse famously declared, 'If he had a hundred thousand readers, the world would be a better place,' Robert Walser (1878-1956) is only now finding an audience among English-speaking readers commensurate with his merits if not with his self-image. After a wandering, precarious life during which he produced poems, essays, stories, and novels, Walser entered an insane asylum, saying, 'I am not here to write, but to be mad.' Many of the unpublished works he left were in fact written in an idiosyncratically abbreviated script that was for years dismissed as an impenetrable private cipher. Fourteen texts from these so-called pencil manuscripts are included in this volume - rich evidence that Walser's microscripts, rather than the work of incipient madness, were in actuality the product of desperate genius building a last reserve, and as such, a treasure in modern literature. With a brisk preface and a chronology of Walser's life and work, this collection of fifty translations of short prose pieces covers the middle to later years of the writer's oeuvre. It provides unparalleled insight into Walser's creative process, along with a unique opportunity to experience the unfolding of his rare and eccentric gift. His novels *The Robber* (Nebraska 2000) and *Jakob von Gunten* are also available in English translation.

robert walser jakob von gunten: *Pseudo-Memoirs* Rochelle Tobias, 2021-07 *Pseudo-Memoir* explores the twentieth-century return of a genre that had largely gone out of fashion after the novel came of age in Europe in the eighteenth century--

robert walser jakob von gunten: *Dialogues between Media* Paul Ferstl, 2021-01-18 Comparative Literature is changing fast with methodologies, topics, and research interests emerging and reemerging. The fifth volume of ICLA 2016 proceedings, *Dialogues between Media*, focuses on the current interest in inter-arts studies, as well as papers on comics studies, further testimony to the fact that comics have truly arrived in mainstream academic discourse. Adaptation is a key term for the studies presented in this volume; various articles discuss the adaptation of literary source texts in different target media - cinematic versions, comics adaptations, TV series, theatre, and opera. Essays on the interplay of media beyond adaptation further show many of the strands that are woven into dialogues between media, and thus the expanding range of comparative literature.

robert walser jakob von gunten: *Castle Gripsholm* Kurt Tucholsky, 2019-05-07 A beguiling fable about a summer holiday in the Swedish countryside that transforms into a provocative parable about oppression and the evil awaiting Europe as the Nazis came to power. *Castle Gripsholm*, the best and most beloved work by Kurt Tucholsky, is a short novel about an enchanted summer holiday. It begins with an assignment: Tucholsky's publisher wants him to write something light and funny, otherwise about whatever Tucholsky wants. A deal is struck and the story is off: about Peter, a writer; his girlfriend, known as the Princess; and a summer vacation far from the hurly-burly of Berlin. Peter and the Princess have rented a small house attached to a historic castle in Sweden, and they have five weeks of long days and white nights at their disposal; five weeks for swimming and walking and sex and talking and visits with Peter's buddy Karlchen and with Billie, the Princess's best friend. It is perfect, until they meet a weeping girl fleeing the cruel headmistress of a home for children. The vacationers decide they must free the girl and send her back to her mother in

Switzerland, which brings about an encounter with authority that casts a worrying shadow over their radiant summer idyll. Soon they must return to Germany. What kind of fairy tale are they living in?

robert walser jakob von gunten: In a Lonely Place Dorothy B. Hughes, 2017-08-15 A classic California noir with a feminist twist, this prescient 1947 novel exposed misogyny in post-World War II American society, making it far ahead of its time. Los Angeles in the late 1940s is a city of promise and prosperity, but not for former fighter pilot Dix Steele. To his mind nothing has come close to matching “that feeling of power and exhilaration and freedom that came with lonesomeness in the sky.” He prowls the foggy city night—bus stops and stretches of darkened beaches and movie houses just emptying out—seeking solitary young women. His funds are running out and his frustrations are growing. Where is the good life he was promised? Why does he always get a raw deal? Then he hooks up with his old Air Corps buddy Brub, now working for the LAPD, who just happens to be on the trail of the strangler who’s been terrorizing the women of the city for months... Written with controlled elegance, Dorothy B. Hughes’s tense novel is at once an early indictment of a truly toxic masculinity and a twisty page-turner with a surprisingly feminist resolution. A classic of golden age noir, *In a Lonely Place* also inspired Nicholas Ray’s 1950 film of the same name, starring Humphrey Bogart.

robert walser jakob von gunten: Germs Richard Wollheim, 2021-02-02 A brilliant, sinuous exploration of family and childhood memory by one of the most original British philosophers of the twentieth century. *Germs* is about first things, the seeds from which a life grows, as well as about the illnesses it incurs, the damage it sustains. Written at the end of his life by Richard Wollheim, one of the major philosophers of the late twentieth century, the book is not the usual story of growing up and getting on but a brilliant recovery and evocation of childhood consciousness and unconsciousness, an eerily precise rendering of that primitive, formative world we all come from in which we do not know either the world or ourselves for sure, and things—houses, clothes, meals, parents—loom large around us, as indispensable as they are out of our control. Richard Wollheim’s remarkably original memoir is a disturbing, enthralling, dispassionate but also deeply personal depiction of a child standing, fascinated and fearful, on the threshold of individual life.

robert walser jakob von gunten: The Return of Munchausen Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky, 2016-12-13 Baron Munchausen’s hold on the European imagination dates back to the late eighteenth century when he first pulled himself (and his horse) out of a swamp by his own upturned pigtail. Inspired by the extravagant yarns of a straight-faced former cavalry officer, Hieronymus von Münchhausen, the best-selling legend quickly eclipsed the real-life baron who helped the Russians fight the Turks. Galloping across continents and centuries, the mythical Munchausen’s Travels went through hundreds of editions of increasing length and luxuriance. Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky, the Russian modernist master of the unsettling and the uncanny, also took certain liberties with the mythical baron. In this phantasmagoric roman à clef set in 1920s Berlin, London, and Moscow, Munchausen dauntlessly upholds his old motto “Truth in lies,” while remaining a fierce champion of his own imagination. At the same time, the two-hundred-year-old baron and self-taught philosopher has agreed to return to Russia, Lenin’s Russia, undercover. This reluctant secret agent has come out of retirement to engage with the real world.

robert walser jakob von gunten: The Invisibility Cloak Ge Fei, 2016-10-11 A lightly surreal story of misfortune, menace, and high-end stereo equipment in the cutthroat, capitalistic world of modern China. An NYRB Classics Original The hero of *The Invisibility Cloak* lives in contemporary Beijing—where everyone is doing their best to hustle up the ladder of success while shouldering an ever-growing burden of consumer goods—and he’s a loser. Well into his forties, he’s divorced (and still doting on his ex), childless, and living with his sister (her husband wants him out) in an apartment at the edge of town with a crack in the wall the wind from the north blows through while he gets by, just, by making customized old-fashioned amplifiers for the occasional rich audio-obsessive. He has contempt for his clients and contempt for himself. The only things he really likes are Beethoven and vintage speakers. Then an old friend tips him off about a special job—a little

risky but just don't ask too many questions—and can it really be that this hopeless loser wins? This provocative and seriously funny exercise in the social fantastic by the brilliantly original Ge Fei, one of China's finest living writers, is among the most original works of fiction to come out of China in recent years. It is sure to appeal to readers of Haruki Murakami and other fabulists of contemporary irreality.

robert walser jakob von gunten: Marrow and Bone Walter Kempowski, 2020-03-24 A moving, darkly funny road trip novel about World War II, returning to one's birthplace, and coming to terms with tragedy. West Germany, 1988, just before the fall of the Berlin Wall: Jonathan Fabrizio, a middle-aged erstwhile journalist, has a comfortable existence in Hamburg, bankrolled by his furniture-manufacturing uncle. He lives with his girlfriend Ulla in a grand, decrepit prewar house that just by chance escaped annihilation by the Allied bombers. One day Jonathan receives a package in the mail from the Santubara Company, a luxury car company, commissioning him to travel in their newest V8 model through the People's Republic of Poland and to write about the route for a car rally. Little does the company know that their choice location is Jonathan's birthplace, for Jonathan is a war orphan from former East Prussia, whose mother breathed her last fleeing the Russians and whose father, a Nazi soldier, was killed on the Baltic coast. At first Jonathan has no interest in the job, or in dredging up ancient family history, but as his relationship with Ulla starts to wane, the idea of a return to his birthplace, and the money to be made from the gig, becomes more appealing. What follows is a darkly comic road trip, a queasy misadventure of West German tourists in Communist Poland, and a reckoning that is by turns subtle, satiric, and genuine. *Marrow and Bone* is an uncomfortably funny and revelatory odyssey by one of the most talented and nuanced writers of postwar Germany.

robert walser jakob von gunten: Little Reunions Eileen Chang, 2018-01-16 A best-selling, autobiographical depiction of class privilege, bad romance, and political intrigue during World War II in China. Now available in English for the first time, Eileen Chang's dark romance opens with Julie, living at a convent school in Hong Kong on the eve of the Japanese invasion. Her mother, Rachel, long divorced from Julie's opium-addict father, saunters around the world with various lovers. Recollections of Julie's horrifying but privileged childhood in Shanghai clash with a flamboyant, sometimes incestuous cast of relations that crowd her life. Eventually, back in Shanghai, she meets the magnetic Chih-yung, a traitor who collaborates with the Japanese puppet regime. Soon they're in the throes of an impassioned love affair that swings back and forth between ardor and anxiety, secrecy and ruin. Like Julie's relationship with her mother, her marriage to Chih-yung is marked by long stretches of separation interspersed with unexpected little reunions. Chang's emotionally fraught, bitterly humorous novel holds a fractured mirror directly in front of her own heart.

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