



by Markus Orth
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Fiction

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The Chambermaid *Das Zimmermädchen*

review

‘She opens the door and takes the final step.’ With this arresting sentence we enter the world of Lynn Zapatek, who is on her way out of a psychiatric clinic, and from then on we follow her bizarre behavioural life, seeing everything through her eyes. We watch as, employed as a chambermaid at the Hotel Eden, she throws herself into her work, until her enthusiasm for cleaning becomes an obsession. At first, in the guests’ rooms, she merely inspects their belongings and speculates about their lives, but when, on one occasion, the occupant returns unexpectedly, she hides under the bed, listening to what goes on. This continues – a new part of her routine – until a particularly violent sex scene occurs and Chiara, the female participant, leaves a card and a telephone number which Lynn follows up. Visiting Chiara to receive her sexual and other attentions is just one further addition to her psychotic weekly schedule.

Why does Lynn clean obsessively? What has happened to alienate her from her mother? Why is she so damaged? Her repetitious, automatised behaviour could be seen as a symptom of the modern age, but that is only part of the answer. An outstanding author’s latest triumph.

press quotes

'Markus Orths sets out his brilliant ideas with down-to-earth originality. (...) He is a master of those irrevocable elements of life, of the existential and the lapidary.' – *Die Zeit*

about the author

Markus Orths, born in 1969, studied philosophy, French and English literature and now lives as an author in Karlsruhe. For his novels and short stories (including bestselling titles *Lehrerzimmer* – published in the UK by Dedalus – and *Catalina* – published in the USA by Toby Press) he has received, among other awards, the Sir Walter Scott Prize, the Marburg Literature Prize and the Berlin 'open mike' contest. His latest, reviewed here, won an award at the 2008 Days of Literature in Klagenfurt, Austria.

Previous works include:

Corpus; Wer geht wo hinterm Sarg?; Catalina; Fluchtversuche – all Schöffling.

rights information

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Miljenko Jergovic.