



The Most High (French Modernist Library Series)

Maurice Blanchot , Allan Stoekl (Translator)

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"Blanchot describes a world where the Absolute has finally overcome all other rivals to its authority. The State is unified, universal, and homogenous, promising perfect satisfaction. Why then does it find revolt everywhere? Could it be the omnipresent police? The plagues? The proliferating prisons and black markets? Written in part as a description of post-World War II Europe, Blanchot's dystopia charts with terrible clarity the endless death of god in an era of constantly metamorphosing but strangely definitive ideologies." - Translation Review Maurice Blanchot has been for a half century one of France's leading authors of fiction and theory. Two of his most ambitious works, *The Space of Literature* and *The Writing of the Disaster*, are also available in Bison Books editions. Allan Stoekl is the author of *On Bataille* and *Agonies of the Intellectual: Commitment, Subjectivity, and the Performative in the Twentieth-Century French Tradition* (Nebraska 1992).

The Most High (French Modernist Library Series) Details

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Hakan T says

80 sayfa ancak dayanabildim. Demek ki Blanchot bana göre de?ilmi?. Sevenlerine, sab?r gösterenlere selam olsun. Okumay? eziyet çekme de?il keyif alma için görme fikrine giderek daha al??yorum galiba. Tabii keyif derken mutlaka hafif kitap olacak anlam? ç?kmas?n. Baz? a??r kitaplar da gayet güzel keyif verebiliyor. Örnek Kafka, Bernhard ... vs. Blanchot beni mutsuz etti, içimi s?kt?. Pi?man de?ilim:)

Eugene says

what a book! a bible! a MOBY DICK! at the same time, an epic bore. a droning monologue of fatigue and sickness...

THE MOST HIGH is an awesome failure — in the sense that PIERRE is a failure or that kafka is. that is to say, not at all — except in the sense that a pure ambition to representative truth must fall abysmally short.

blanchot might've given a snort at the idea that his project had anything to do with representing truth. this sorrentino review (in the NYTimes—evidently such a thing was possible but a scant two decades ago) of a number of blanchot's translations from station hill press argues that blanchot above all believed in the paradoxical lie of language, its inherent corruption and artificiality.

nonetheless this novel, published in 1948, seems to want to capture a certain philosophical hell particular to its post-war era, which nonetheless uncannily resonates with our current moment. in its political theory it has antecedent in CANDIDE's horrific picaresque within the best of all possible worlds; the translator's preface mentions the work's cousins in camus' THE PLAGUE and orwell's 1984; and in its use of the state as self-created disease it has intellectual descendants in, among others, saramago's BLINDNESS and naomi klein's SHOCK DOCTRINE.

but there's no use trying to reduce it. the story of a civil servant, henry sorge, and his descent into a bureaucratic hell and plague defies summary. the same end-of-history ideas that spawned contemporary neoconservatism and arguably our current atrocious wars of imperialism are shown here (in 1948!) to be an ideological prison of hypocrisy and inescapable doubletalk. as well and importantly, it's an indictment of our tacit complicity in these daily repressions and horrors.

...nothing's higher than the law. Really, all offenses are plots against the law: you'd like to disobey it, but since that isn't possible, you have to rebel against its legitimacy. A long time ago you could steal and leave it at that; now you're committing through the theft an infinitely more serious crime, the most terrible of all and, besides, a crime that can't be carried out, that fails. Of that crime there remains, precisely, only an insignificant trace — the theft (41).

(i should also say that i've tried blanchot many times over the past decade and just couldn't get through it. to me, THOMAS THE OBSCURE was. and i seem to have absolutely no stomach for the straight-up theory (though friends have said THE WRITING OF THE DISASTER is also a must.) i only mention this to say THE MOST HIGH i found much more readable. even though it has a fractured structure, dialogues or

situations more than plot, seems to shift fundamental style each chapter, and has looooong blocks of abstruse monologue-ing — i was drawn in by the continuity of its purpose... and maybe i'm still untrained and the others in fact do await my arrival like sanctuaries in time. nice to think.)

another quote, along the same theme:

For the State will know how to use your insubordination, and not only will it take advantage of it, but you, in opposition and revolt, will be its delegate and representative as fully as you would have been in your office, following the law. The only change is that you want change and there won't be any. What you'd like to call destruction of the State will always appear to you really as service to the State. What you'll do to escape the law will still be the force of the law for you. And when the State decides to annihilate you, you'll know that this annihilation doesn't sanction your error, doesn't give you, before history, the vain arrogance of men in revolt, but rather that it makes you one of these modest and correct servants on the dust of whom rests the good of all — and your good as well (137).

if you've some time, you really should check it out.

Maxim says

Everything he - "truth" says is a lie and if there is a truth, it disappears when we try to get closer...

Dida says

This book! Loved each and every word.
