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Strange turnings

February, Oliver

2019
https://hdl.handle.net/10539/29467
February, Oliver Justin. (2019). Strange turnings. University of the Witwatersrand, https://hdl.handle.net/10539/29467

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Abstract

This project is a set of short stories that examines a particular character type that is obsessive, anxious and feels out of place in the world. Important influences are Lydia Davis, Thomas Bernhard and W G Sebald. The primary aim was to represent and interrogate – through the minute, capillary and affective movements of power that literature represents so well – a consciousness full of resentment at being kept out of the world whose attempts at communication with others are repeatedly thwarted. As such, the most important element of the collection as a whole was the creation of an unnamed narrator who appears in every story, often in conversation with another character, but sometimes simply as a voice delivering an obsessive monologue. In the stories with an interlocutor the general structure is shaped through the disappointed contact between the narrator and the other character/s as he attempts to connect with another in conversation but feels excluded. Often the two characters are involved in a walk around the natural or urban environment. This allows both for the few examples of setting and natural detail that the deeply internal stories exhibit, and also for the homonymous analogue between the wandering of the walker/s and the wondering pattern of the narrators thought and conversations. As it developed a process emerged, one in which the writing attempted to present or enact the inarticulate by writing very precisely at a oblique angle to those feelings of vulnerability and anxious obsession that were the intended subjects but were difficult and impossible to articulate. One subject or conversation was worried at obsessively until another (the unspoken subtext of the first) became sensible through relief. In this sense the problem of thwarted connection is circumvented by the communication with the reader of deep emotion through this oblique style.