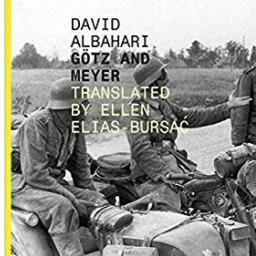


Götz and Meyer (Serbian Literature)

By David Albahari



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A Jewish schoolteacher tells the story of Wilhelm Götz and Erwin Meyer in the process of researching the deaths of his relatives during World War II. These two SS officers were assigned to drive a hermetically sealed truck in which concentration-camp prisoners were slowly asphyxiated. Soon this knowledge overwhelms day-to-day life, and the teacher comes to see past and present merge in a heartbreakingly moment of remembrance. Among the best and most haunting novels about the Holocaust to emerge in the final years of the twentieth century, Götz and Meyer is David Albahari's masterpiece.

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Götz and Meyer (Serbian Literature) By David Albahari Bibliography

- Rank: #1056768 in Books
- Published on: 2015-04-07
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.90" h x .70" w x 5.40" l, .45 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 180 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Embodiments of the banality of evil, Götz and Meyer are two German SS noncommissioned officers who drive a truck in which, over a period of weeks, they gas to death 5,000 Jewish inmates of a Belgrade concentration camp. "They are conscientious, they always arrive on time, they are calm and cheerful... their uniforms tidy, their step light," and they even hand out chocolates to cheer up the children they are about to kill. The nameless narrator of this haunting Holocaust story, a Jewish teacher in post-Cold War Belgrade, fixates on the two men to get a handle on the murder of his parents' families by the Nazis. Serbian novelist Albahari (*Bait*) imagines the mundane circumstances of their lives as their obscene task dulls into everyday routine, and delves into the history of those who died in the camp. He elaborates the details of the Nazi extermination apparatus, how the carbon monoxide gas acts, the hopeless stabs at normality by the imprisoned Jews. Eventually, the narrator's flat, prosaic recitation of facts merges with hallucinatory reveries in which both his relatives and their murderers come to life. Even as his attempts to extract meaning through a historical recreation of the catastrophe grow increasingly futile, they yield in the end a numbed but moving elegy. (*Dec.*)

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From [Booklist](#)

"What would I have done?" is a fundamental question in Holocaust literature. Translated from the Serbian, this stirring novel draws on a wealth of archival materials, maps, and Nazi bureaucratic records about the concentration camp at the Belgrade Fairgrounds, from where, over five months in 1942, 5,000 Jews were loaded into a truck and gassed. A Serbian Jewish college professor looks back now and obsessively imagines himself as perpetrator, victim, and bystander. Who were the two drivers who connected the exhaust pipe each time so that the fumes killed the passengers? How did it become just a routine job? Who buried the heaped corpses? What if one kid tried to resist? How could Belgrade citizens not know? There are no chapters or even paragraphs, but the spacious text is simple and eloquent, and readers will be drawn into the professor's obsessive first-person narrative in which the horror is in the facts of bureaucratic efficiency and the unimaginable evil in ordinary life. *Hazel Rochman*

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Review

"At once a novel, fictional biography, history and meta-fictional commentary, Götz and Meyer, composed in a single hallucinatory paragraph without space breaks (stylistically redolent of W. G. Sebald), is simultaneously a masterful addition to the literature of the Holocaust and a fascinating philosophical meditation on that enormity." --San Francisco Chronicle

A remarkable, unforgettable novel.

(Laura Farmer *The Gazette*)

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