

FORGOTTEN

Thomas Bernhard



The most interesting foreigners always put up at the Warsaw Hotel Saski, where I have stayed on several occasions, and it is for this reason that I always go to the Hotel Saski and not the Bristol or the Europejski, which have always disappointed me. One evening, close to midnight, when I was sitting all alone in the lower lobby, a gentleman sat down at my table and told me the following story. He said he had left the hotel about two hours before to catch a bus to Wilanow, where he had an appointment with a business partner in the vicinity of the Royal Palace; he hated taxis, he said, and it was for this reason, and not because it was cheaper, that he always traveled by bus. Polish buses, he took this opportunity of telling me, were the most comfortable in the whole world, and no matter how many people were crammed into them the air was always of the best quality. In any case, he loved Poland more than any other country, which I can understand, for I know of no country that I like better. He was born in Silesia but held a Canadian passport and probably was always accustomed to talking alternately in German and English, a manner of speaking that I have always found attractive and stimulating. On that evening, however, when the stranger, according to his custom, left the Hotel Saski and went to the bus stop, he suddenly had no idea what he was doing out in the street and went back into the Hotel Saski again. But as he had no idea why he had left the hotel and gone to the bus stop, he could not settle down in the Hotel Saski and left the Hotel Saski again and spent two hours walking around the Hotel Saski. About ten minutes ago, he said, he suddenly remembered that he had wanted to go to Wilanow to meet the above-mentioned business partner. But by then it was too late to go out to Wilanow and he decided to go back into the hotel, sit down in the lobby, and drink a glass of whisky. He was still very upset by the incident and ordered two glasses of whisky, one for himself and one for me.