

The Jewish Messiah



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One of the great provocateurs of world literature has written perhaps his most outrageous and morally necessary novel: the story of a confused young man from a family with a Nazi past who decides he will devote his life to redeeming the suffering of the Jews in his own unorthodox way

What is it to the sixteen-year-old Swiss youth Xavier Radek that his grandfather served in the SS? Why are Xavier's parents so quiet, so furtive, so uninterested in doing anything with their lives, in pursuing any great causes? Not that there seem to be many great causes on offer in Basel, Switzerland, at least within reach of a restless, socially nervous and-let's admit-not notably gifted young man. Until, that is, Xavier meets some members of the Basel Jewish youth group and comes to know a boy named Awromele, son of a local rabbi. Suddenly the light goes on: this group of people, who have suffered so much, need his help, and he will not stint at giving it to them. So it is that young Xavier decides to convert to Judaism and to begin his long journey to influence and, in the end, to infamy. With him at every step is the rabbi's son Awromele, first as his guide, then as his lover, and finally as his devoted right-hand man.

Although Awromele arguably bears some responsibility for the botched circumcision that costs Xavier his left testicle, and while his decision to coax Xavier into collaborating on the first translation of Mein Kampf into Yiddish is of questionable taste, and his sexual promiscuity can often be hurtful, on the deeper issue of emotional fidelity there can be no doubt. Awromele sticks by Xavier's side through life's every turn: when Xavier's mother's sexual addiction to her favorite kitchen knife creates ugly domestic strife; when Xavier's father takes his own life; when Xavier transplants the two young men to Amsterdam so he can attend art school; when the two migrate to Israel; when Xavier enters politics; when he is elected Israeli prime minister; and when he chooses the nuclear option.

Both a great love story and a grotesque farce, both an assault on the most well-guarded pieties and taboos of our age and a profound reckoning with the limits of human guilt, cruelty, and suffering, *The Jewish Messiah* is without question Arnon Grunberg's masterpiece.

作者介绍:

Arnon Grunberg wrote his first novel, *Blue Mondays*, a European bestseller that won the Anton Wachter Prize for debut fiction, at age twenty- three, and his work has been translated into twenty-one languages. He was born in Amsterdam in 1971, dropped out of school at age seventeen, and started his own publishing company two years later. Two of his novels, *Phantom Pain* and *The Asylum Seeker*, won the AKO Literature Prize, the Dutch equivalent of the Booker Prize. In 2002 it became clear that the mysterious Viennese writer Marek van der Jagt, who made his debut with the novel *The Story of My Baldness*, was Arnon Grunberg. *The Story of My Baldness* also won the Anton Wachter Prize, making Grunberg the only novelist to have won it twice. Grunberg writes columns, book reviews, and essays for various Dutch and Belgian newspapers and magazines and a blog for the literary magazine *Words without Borders*. He lives in New York.

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