ForeWord Reviews

SHORT STORIES

The Unauthorized Biography of Michele Bachmann (and other stories)
Ken Brosky
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Everybody knows cookies are a no-no before dinner. Of course, people still ruin their appetites because nothing compares to the joy of destructive self-indulgence. But serious self-indulgence comes with a higher price than a bellyache. For those unwilling to pay, the world of literature offers countless ways to experience other people's screw ups.

Building on the emotional wastelands portrayed by Chuck Palaniuk's anonymous hero in *Fight Club* and Irvine Welsh's heroin-addict narrators *Trainspotting*, Ken Brosky's collection provides a vicarious escape for short story fans looking to indulge in the skewed and different.

Filled with slackers, jerks, sloths, failures, and otherwise flawed characters, *The Unauthorized Biography of Michele Bachmann (and Other Stories)* ranges from introspective and broody to funny, nuanced, and absurd. The lack of a common thread to tie the stories together causes the reader to ricochet from one life to another, unprepared for the swings in mood. Whether it's Famine's interactions with the baristas at a café drive-thru window in "Apocalypse Wow" or the increasingly dark alternate endings to a wounded vet's story of returning home from Iraq in "I Can't Just Turn It Off," the stories' highs and lows hit harder when readers can't see them coming.

Brosky briefly departs from his short stories to include a humorous essay on one of the great online phenomena of the early millennium. "Amazon.com and the New Meta-Fiction" surveys the ironic and sarcastic comments found on the e-tailer's site. Fans of Three-Wolf Moon T-Shirt will appreciate the trail of products Brosky follows. Those who haven't discovered the company will be thankful for the introduction.

It would be easy to dismiss *The Unauthorized Biography of Michele Bachmann (and Other Stories)* as merely self-indulgent writing. From a self-styled "director's commentary" introduction to the patronizing first of two intermissions, readers are never allowed to forget they're reading fiction. They're never able to fully immerse themselves into the stories without the presence of the author. But like a pinch of cayenne pepper added to a batch of chocolate chip cookies, Brosky's ego is the flavor that turns his cast of misfits into the perfect confection.

Born, educated, and living in the Madison-Milwaukee area, Ken Brosky's work has appeared in a variety of publications, including *Shadowland*, *Via Galactica*, *the Santa Fe Writers Project* journal, and several anthologies. He currently publishes about three stories a year. *The Unauthorized Biography of Michele Bachmann (and Other Stories)* is Brosky's third book after *The King of Blades* and *Grendel*.

Joseph Thompson