



On the Heights of Despair

E. M. Cioran

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Born of a terrible insomnia—"a dizzying lucidity which would turn even paradise into hell"—this book presents the youthful Cioran, a self-described "Nietzsche still complete with his Zarathustra, his poses, his mystical clown's tricks, a whole circus of the heights."

On the Heights of Despair shows Cioran's first grappling with themes he would return to in his mature works: despair and decay, absurdity and alienation, futility and the irrationality of existence. It also presents Cioran as a connoisseur of apocalypse, a theoretician of despair, for whom writing and philosophy both share the "lyrical virtues" that alone lead to a metaphysical revelation.

"No modern writer twists the knife with Cioran's dexterity. . . . His writing . . . is informed with the bitterness of genuine compassion."—Bill Marx, *Boston Phoenix*

"The dark, existential despair of Romanian philosopher Cioran's short meditations is paradoxically bracing and life-affirming. . . . Puts him in the company of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard."—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

"This is self-pity as epigram, the sort of dyspeptic pronouncement that gets most people kicked out of bed but that has kept Mr. Cioran going for the rest of his life."—Judith Shulevitz, *New York Times Book Review*

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