

"Warner brings an amused world view and incisive understanding of the warped and funny aspects of all of us to this terrific novel. Buy it, read it, save it, reread it, but don't ever lend it out, you might not get it back."

-- John Hill, screenwriter of QUIGLEY DOWN UNDER

Irving Warner, whose collection of stories called *In Memory of Hawks*, and *Other Stories from Alaska* was published by Pleasure Boat Studio: A Literary Press in 1998, has come up now with a remarkable and wild comic novel about an obese man who escapes from a so-called weight-loss institution and is pursued by the police, the state patrol, and numerous bounty hunters. All these have been set after him by Wagner's billionaire mother, whom he refers to as the Salmon Queen. His mother had him committed ostensibly in order for him to lose some of the immense weight he's been carrying. Wagner, however, has other plans. He found the extreme dieting to be maddening and inhuman, and he had nothing on his mind but getting out. And getting food. If you can imagine a cross between *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* and *Catcher in the Rye*, you'll have some idea of the kinds of adventures Wagner experiences as he slices and dices his way across North Carolina.

It's not for everyone. This novel breaks rules of decorum and, certainly, political correctness. It tears through most people's concepts of proper conduct the way Wagner's own vehicles tear through the North Carolina countryside. In doing so, however, Warner has taken the horrors of obesity and laid them bare on the pages of this book, darkly yet spiritedly, in a manner not seen in American literature.

Wagner, Descending could be read as a trip through hell (hence the title) if we look at hell as being North Carolina hill country. The character appears to be a pure misanthrope, but in reality he's a horribly abused, morbidly obese man with a great heart and a brilliant mind. The novel reveals what his physical condition has led him to. He has become a victim of his own size, a living consequence of his enormity. The people he encounters along the way, and the manners in which they respond to this monstrous man, are sometimes obstacles, sometimes allies, and absolutely unforgettable.

Wagner, like Randall McMurphy of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, is descending into a desperate attempt to live his own life rather than to succumb to the forced deadening that the hospital is imposing on him. Part of the irony in this novel is that Wagner's mother wants to help him by "saving" him from his own food obsession, but in fact she's "killing" him, or killing his spirit, at any rate. This is a marvelous multi-layered work. Unfortunately, the first layer may be tough for some to get through because Wagner initially comes across as so despicable and cynical.

ISBN 1-929355-17-3



Wagner, Descending [or *The Wrath of the Salmon Queen*] — Irving Warner — Pleasure Boat Studio

a novel
by Irving Warner

Wagner, Descending:

The Wrath of the Salmon Queen