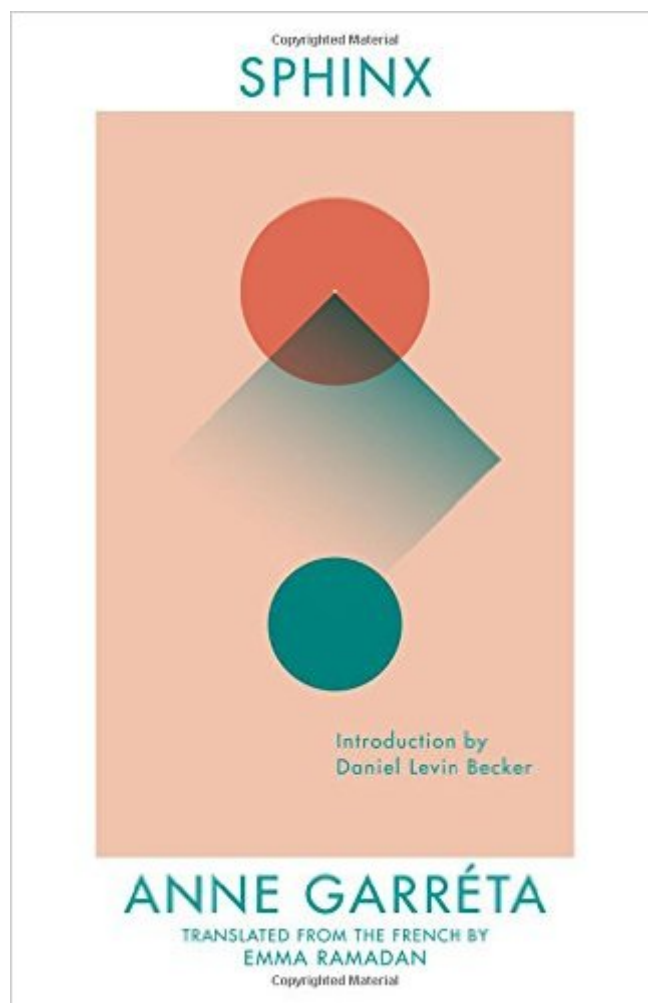


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Sphinx



Synopsis

Nominated for the 2016 PEN Translation Prize One of Flavorwire's Top 50 Independent Books of 2015 One of Entropy Magazine's Best Fiction Books of 2015 One of Bookriot's 100 Must-Read Books Translated From French Sphinx is the remarkable debut novel, originally published in 1986, by the incredibly talented and inventive French author Anne Garraffa, one of the few female members of Oulipo, the influential and exclusive French experimental literary group whose mission is to create literature based on mathematical and linguistic restraints, and whose ranks include Georges Perec and Italo Calvino, among others. A beautiful and complex love story between two characters, the narrator, "I," and their lover, A***, written without using any gender markers to refer to the main characters, Sphinx is a remarkable linguistic feat and paragon of experimental literature that has never been accomplished before or since in the strictly-gendered French language. Sphinx is a landmark text in the feminist, LGBT, and experimental literary canons appearing in English for the first time.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (8 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

I didn't go into reading Anne Garraffa's first novel, Sphinx with low expectations. Everything I had read about it online pointed towards this being an exceptional book, so it wasn't a surprise when the language on the very first page of the book had me hooked. "Languid nights at the whim of syncopated rhythms and fleeting pulses; the road to hell was lit with pale lanterns; the bottom of the abyss drew closer indefinitely; I moved through the smooth insides of a whirlwind and gazed at deformed images of ecstatic bodies in the slow, hoarse death rattle of tortured flesh." Told

through the prism of faded memory, we are drawn into the world of a nameless narrator; at the beginning of the story a student of theology, ostracized by the dogmatic opinions of the other students and attracted to the rhythms of the Parisian underworld; to nightclubs and cabarets and a life that takes place entirely at night. In this world our narrator meets and falls in love with A***, an exotic dancer, and the novel unfolds as the story of their unlikely but passionate and troubled romance. Before encountering this novel I had never heard of OuLiPo, a French group of writers who write within self-imposed constraints. Anne Gar  tta was not a member of the group at the time of this (her first) novel  s first publication in 1986, but she is now, and as I understand it this one would have met the standards. As Daniel Becker says in his introduction, if you don  t know what the constraint she imposed is, then do everything in your power to keep it that way until you have a chance to read the book, and see how long it takes you to work it out.

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