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Thomas Glavinic
**Carl Haffners Liebe
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Thomas Glavinic
Carl Haffner's Love of the Draw
204 Pages

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Vienna, 1910: Carl Haffner is playing the great Emanuel Lasker for the title of world chess champion. It is a seemingly impossible task, for Lasker has already held the title for 16 years, and Haffner is a highly unlikely challenger--brilliant and gifted, but also shy, sickly, and perversely preferring to draw rather than win. Alternating between the 10 matches of the tournament and Carl Haffner's childhood and adolescence, Austrian writer Thomas Glavinic's *Love of the Draw* gradually elaborates Haffner's troubled personality--as a child, his only real communication with his father occurs through the medium of chess--and culminates in what seems to be the key moment of his chess playing life.

Based on the real-life historical encounter of Lasker and Karl Schlechter (recast as the fictional Haffner), the book persuasively recreates the Viennese chess world and imaginatively constructs the complex psychology of the protagonist in a prose that itself emulates certain European novels of the period, redolent of the worlds of Knut Hamsun, or perhaps even Franz Kafka in his less metaphysical moments. But this is no mere pastiche: the tournament is played out against the barely alluded to but ever present backdrop of European politics and the future traumas of World War One, and Glavinic subtly explores the difficulties of taking the game as a metaphor for life--for in many cases it has become a replacement for real engagement with the world. Haffner himself refuses to literalize the game and struggles to resist allowing material and political considerations to ruin the aesthetic pleasure which chess affords him. The chess-player here almost becomes the exemplary figure of the artist suffering in a profane world. Thomas Glavinic's *Love of the Draw* is elegantly constructed and quietly compelling: a fresh and intelligent novel.

Thomas Glavinic

Born in Graz, Austria, *Thomas Glavinic* is the author of several novels, essays, short stories, radio-plays and articles. Winner of the Friedrich Glauser Prize for Crime Fiction 2002 for the best novel. "*Der Kameramörder*" was first published in 2001.

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