



E penguara: Requiem për Linda B.

Ismail Kadare

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A Girl in Exile, first published in Albanian in 2009, is set among the bureaucratic machinery of Albania's 1945-1991 dictatorship. While waiting to hear whether his newest play will be approved for production, playwright Rudian Stefa is called in for questioning by the Party Committee. A girl - Linda B. - has been found dead, with a signed copy of his latest book in her possession.

He soon learns that Linda's family, considered suspect, was exiled to a small town far from the capital, and that she committed suicide. Under the influence of a paranoid regime, Rudian finds himself swept along on a surreal quest to discover what really happened to Linda B. Through layers of intrigue, her story gradually unfolds: how she loved Rudian from a distance, and the risks she was prepared to take so that she could get close to him. He becomes captivated by her story, and disturbed at how he might be culpable for her fate.

A Girl in Exile is a stunning, deeply affecting portrait of life and love under surveillance, infused with myth, wry humor, and the absurdity of a paranoid regime.

E penguara: Requiem për Linda B. Details

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Author : Ismail Kadare

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From Reader Review E penguara: Requiem për Linda B. for online ebook

Kristin Marie says

Sometimes, when I am at the library, I go through the new book section to see if anything stands out to me or appears remotely interesting. I am very familiar with the phrase never judge a book by its cover, but that is the first thing I see and it draws me in. From the darkened image of the girl falling, to the font of the title "A Girl in Exile" to the color of the background, or the author's name (Ismail Kadare) in red, it called out to me. I read the inside jacket and decided that it had piqued my interest and I would give it a go.

It was 177 pages of a man's descent into madness that ended with him wanting to marry a dead girl's spirit (spoiler alert)... No interesting content. No surprises. Nothing engaging.

I know the translation from Albanian to English brings with it its own issues, but there was so much reading and rereading to figure out who was talking, what they were talking about, and why I gave a flying fart about it.

I will still continue seeing out foreign authors as I want to expand my knowledge, but this was rough. I should have stopped reading before I started. I cannot recommend this. At all. To anyone.

Happy Reading (Anything else)!

Cherise Wolas says

Challenging and interesting. Self-obsessed Rudian Stefan, a well-known novelist and playwright, is summoned for questioning by the Party Committee. He thinks it's about his newest play, which features a ghost, that changes the nature of ghosts in literature for the first time in a 1000 years, but the summoning has to do with a girl he doesn't know whose body was found with his newest book, in which he'd inscribed a souvenir from the author. He'd been asked for a copy of his book by the girl he's sleeping with, Migena, whom he fears could be an informant. There are details of the investigation, dream sequences, musings, revelations, interspersed with meditations on the myth of Orpheus, etc. It's a short book, and the prose is direct and sometimes startling, and one feels completely turned around all through it.

Bryn (Plus Others) says

I read this without knowing what to expect and it took me a very long time to have any understanding of what the book was doing -- in large part because I began it knowing absolutely nothing about Albania, so I could not at first even figure out if it was about a historical reality or Ruritania-turned-dystopia. The more I understood, the more I appreciated it, and I finished it with enjoyment; I think it is a book that will be excellent upon rereading when I can see how it all fits together from the beginning and understand the sorrow in it without so much time puzzling over the pieces.

Slymandra says

[**Around the World challenge: Albania**] I can tell I missed the point with this book and didn't manage to find the different levels of understanding. The first part was pretty confusing, then the part where Migena tells Linda's story was more interesting and gripping. I liked the witty writing style. Overall I'm not blown away, maybe it wasn't the best book to discover Kadare with.

Hugh Coverly says

Another astonishing novel by an author of outstanding talent. Where, one might ask, is Kadare's Nobel Prize?

I have sought out and read Kadare ever since he won the inaugural Man Booker International prize in 2005, thereby coming to the attention of readers in North America. At first, it was easy to find titles in major bookstores, but this no longer the case. The more recent works, including this one, have not appeared in Canada; instead, I pick them up while on trips to Europe.

A Girl in Exile: Requiem for Linda B. is a multilayered, complex story of love and loss. But this no conventional love story. Informing the whole of the story is the mythical tale of Orpheus who goes into Hades to lead Eurydice back into the world of the living, only to lose her forever when he disobeys the command not to look back.

Written originally in Albanian, the novel has been translated beautifully by John Hodgson, who also translated *The Fall of the Stone City* and *The Accident*.

Blerina says

Linda B. is the girl brought up during the communist regime in Albania. She and her whole family are interned into a village, and therefore banned to enter the city of Tirana. After graduating from high school in Tirana, Linda B. must return to the village where her family is and never set foot in the city. For a young girl whose lived and loved in the city and has so many dreams ahead this is simply murder. Kadare is a master at portraying this feeling of isolation and the loss of hope that so many people suffered in communist Albania. What is special about Kadare's writing is his subliminal language, there's always a sort of duality to the story. Like many artists and writers this style of writing was developed and used under the dictatorship of Enver Hoxha. Writers and artists were on a very close watch and for their safety of not being declared an enemy of the party, they had to find ways to create and yet stay under the radar. Being Albanian from Kosovo, for me this brings back memories of my parents talking about the 50 years of the communist isolation of Albania. Linda B. is ready to trade her life for eternal freedom, and so reading *E penguara*, is inevitably, a powerful reminder that freedom has no price.

Andy Weston says

Read whilst cycling in Albania's mountains.
Enjoyed it a lot.

Alex Sarll says

I have a couple of noughties Kadare paperbacks, unread, which both have pointedly austere and literary covers. This one, with its title and falling female silhouette, seems aimed more at the new audience for moderately literary thrillers with unreliable point-of-view characters and names including the word 'Girl'. Who will likely be disappointed as the Orpheus references take hold and everything goes more magic-realist - but I was ensnared, having spent much of the earlier stretch wondering if a lot had been lost in translation. The sections on literary life under the socialist-realist jackboot don't hold a candle to Bulgakov, but the bizarre emotional entanglements have odd glimmering vignettes where they bear comparison to de Beauvoir.

(Review copy, my more professional review of which will be appearing in some of what remains of the British regional press in a month or so)

Lukáš Palán says

Moje první albánská knížka a primo od albánského numero uno spisovatele, tedy Dr. Albána. No, nemůžu říct, že by to dopadlo dobře.

Dr. Albán se v tomto díle pokouší trochu kunderovat, takže valíme silnou romanci na pozadí komunistického režimu. Vo co de, ptáte se literární rodino? No hned vám to sem fouknu: spisovatel navlíkl nějaký buchtu podpis do knížky, jenže buchtu se voběsí a začne vyšetřování. Paranoia, na kterou kniha lakala, se projevovala maximálně tak v mých gaticích, kdy jsem nevěděl, jestli se z toho už náhodou neposeru. Hlavní hrdina je otravný asi jako Jan Preucil, přičemž se před námi rozplete milostný trojúhelník se zápletkou, která byla tak přiblblá, že jsem se málem taky voběsil. Konec jsem už vyložene protřpel, jako když mi třeba stará rika co se musí zejtra koupit.

Za mě ne dr. Albáne.

Julia says

The time the story was placed, was just a little bit depressing, and from time to time, I didn't have the nerve to keep reading. So many nonsenses, but that still in those days "had" to make sense... But I really loved the ending, its cruelty was adorable, and so kind... (still with the nonsenses...)

tutajkara says

It took me a while to read this book but I truly loved it. This book is so much different from what I expected. And it was so interesting to read as I don't know that much about Albania. I think this is the type of the book that you would like to reread. The last pages were amazing!

Evisa Rami says

I am not a big fan of Kadare - and I am not referring to his literature- but this book is simply brilliant. Read it at once, and I am afraid it has become my favorite Albanian book so far. If you want to have a taste of the brutality and cruelty of the Albanian Communism, depicted in both real and surreal shades, then you should pick this book up.

Αταλάντη Ευριπίδου says

Αυτὸ ἦταν τὸ δευτέρου βιβλίου τοῦ Ἰσμαήλ Κανταρῆ που διβασα (τὸ πρῶτο ἦταν τὸ ἐξῆςιο "Ποιὸς ἔφερε τὴν Ντορουντῆν", που εἶναι παραλλαγή τοῦ "Νεκροῦ Ἀδερφοῦ"). Δυστυχῶς, δὲν μπῆρεσα νὰ ἀπολαύσω καθόλου τὸ βιβλίο - που διαισθῆνομαι πὼς θὰ μου ῥεσε υπῆ ἄλλες συνθήκες - λόγω τῆς μετῴφρασης. Τὸ κείμενο μοιῶζει νὰ μὴν ἔχει τὴν παραμικρὴ συνῆπεια, νὰ μὴν ξῆρει ἀν θῆλει νὰ εἶναι σῆγχρονο ἢ νὰ μυρῶζει παλιῶ, ἀλλοῶ ἢ ἀφηγηματικῶ φωνῶ εἶναι μοντῆρνα, ἀλλοῶ μοιῶζει λες καὶ γρῴφτηκε τὸ βιβλίο τοῦ 1800. Πολλῶ εἰσῆλθε (πολλῶ, ῆμως), ἐξῆλθε, μετῆγω, μεταβῆνω καὶ λοιπῶ καὶ λοιπῶ, τὰ ὁποῶ κῆνουν ῆνα μυθιστῆρημα τοῦ 2010 νὰ μυρῶζει νὰφθαλῆνη. Ἐξεζητημῆνες λῆξεις, που φανερῶ καμῆα θῆση δὲν ῆχουν ἐκεῶ που βρῶσκονται, πετῆνε διαρκῶς ἐκτῶς κῆματος τὸν ῆμοιρο τὸν ἀναγῆστη. Δὲν ξῆρω, γενικῶ λυπῆθηκα πῆρα πολῶ γιὰτῶ πραγματικῶ ῆθελα νὰ μου ἀρῶσει αὐτῶ τὸ βιβλίο καὶ, διαβῶζοντῶς τὸ, ῆνωθα διαρκῶς πὼς θὰ μπορῶσε νὰ μου ἀρῶσει.

Jeffrey Keeten says

”May I see the book again?” he asked the investigator.

He opened it with his left hand, because his right hand was shaking. He stared at his own handwriting. The inscription had been written on the first night of his most recent play, in the foyer immediately afterward: *For Linda B., a souvenir from the author. June 12th.*”

Most authors sign a lot of copies of their books over their lifetime. Rudian Stefa is no exception. The Party Committee has called him in to see if he remembers this girl, this Linda B. Stefa is used to being investigated. His most recent play is up before the Artistic Board over some problems with a ghost in act 2. He has learned to write very carefully to slide what would be considered subversive ideas through the various layers of bureaucratic oversight.

So he thinks he is before The Party for one thing and finds out that he is there for another reason, a very strange reason. He shouldn't remember the girl, but he does remember the girl, not Linda B., but the girl who brought the book to be signed for Linda B.

Migena.

"The name Migena and the word enigma fluttered through his mind, attempting to come together. They were anagrams. Migena, enigma. To make sure, he wrote the words on the menu, next to the words for espresso coffee. Yes, they really were anagrams. Yes: shuffle the letters of Migena and you got enigma."

She is gorgeous, and she is interested in him. When he is with her, the pressures of his life seem to explode out of him. When she is away, a bitter anxiety sets in like a dreary, windy, winter's day. He doesn't trust her. He can't ascertain how she sees her role in his life. *"The clumsy thought passed through her mind that her breasts were just as sweet whether she was an informer or not."*

Ismail Kadare talks about the internments imposed on people by the State. **"One of those laws was extremely strange, and many people believed it must be unique to Albania. This law concerned political prisoners and internees who died before completing their sentences. Their bodies, even though vacated by their souls, had to continue serving their sentences in the grave, wherever they happened to be, until the end. Only after the expiry of the term of their sentence did their families have the right to exhume them from the cemeteries designated by the state, and take them wherever they wished."**

That reminds me of situations from Medieval Europe when corpses of enemies of a King were dug up, drawn and quartered, and then hung.

THEY ARE DEAD ALREADY!!!

A sentenced person in Albania has to keep serving his/her sentence even after they are dead? We have several examples in history where a far left communist government becomes so paranoid and so hard hearted as to forget that their own people are living, breathing, adult, human beings, not cattle who need to be herded, or immature children who need to be told how to live every aspect of their life, or that a prison sentence needs to be fulfilled by the corpse of the "perpetrator." There is an insanity that seems to come with far left or far right political theory. Communism goes so far left and Fascism goes so far right that they start to be indistinguishable from each other. The scale that has them going in opposite directions curves, and they meet up again at the House of Horrors.

This is not one of my favorite Ismail Kadare's, but that could be because he is just way too smart for me. Maybe I didn't see a couple of clues, or maybe I just need to be Albanian to decipher the words that are not written but implied. **"The mercilessly crossed-out lines loomed black, and the survivors huddled awkwardly, as if cowering in shame amid the carnage."** In such a short book, Kadare does take on some big subjects: censorship, love/lust, tyranny, and a topic that should be on everyone's mind, the whys of suicide.

Kadare will take you down a Franz Kafka, hypnagogic hallucination inspired, crooked alley of ghostly delusions if you can read the Albanian street signs.

If you wish to see more of my most recent book and movie reviews visit <http://www.jeffreykeeten.com>
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Bob Newman says

sunk in the totalitarian swamp

Rudian Stefa, a playwright, has a girlfriend. He doesn't treat her very well, but still, he dotes on her. Once, before they became lovers, the girl, Migena, asked him to autograph a copy of one of his books. She said it was for a friend. He thinks it's an extremely minor matter, maybe it was just for herself. One day he's called into the Party Committee in Tirana (Albania's capital) to explain why he signed the book and under what circumstances. The "friend" has committed suicide. Since it's Albania during the rule of Enver Hoxha, such a summons is scary. But why have they called him? He begins to enquire and we start to learn the inside story. The friend is a girl in internal exile--that is, she and her family are forbidden to leave their town and must check in with the police every day. Any deviance from these rules would mean either execution or prison. She has fallen in love with Rudian Stefa from afar, knowing that she can never travel to Tirana to meet him. Things become more and more convoluted, the sickness of totalitarian society is slowly unraveled. Poetry, plays, and Greek legends all start to have meaning in this tale of dismal Albanian disaster. In the Albania of the 1980s, could you trust anyone? Could you be sure your lover would not turn you in? Even playing the saxophone too extravagantly leads to a jail sentence. The ending is simply brilliant. The evil of such a paranoid dictatorship is revealed better than in a hundred polemics on "the Communist threat" or "the Fascist peril". Hannah Arendt's "banality of evil" finds perfect expression here. Vague reports, uncertain conclusions, the fog covering reality and separating it only thinly from legend. Once again, Kadare has written an amazingly good book. If it wasn't for their politically correct prejudices and occupation with various high jinks, the Nobel Committee would have awarded him the Nobel years ago.
