



Breakfast at Midnight

Louis Armand

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“An elegy in E-flat for the other Prague.”

Kafkaville. Blake is a pornographer who photographs corpses. Ten years ago, a young man becomes a fugitive when a redhead disappears on a bridge in the rain. Now, at the turn of the millennium, another redhead has turned up in the morgue, and the fugitive can't get the dead girl's image out of his head. For Blake, it's all a game – a funhouse where denial is the currency, deceit is the grand prize, and all doors lead to one destination: murder. In the psychological noir-scape of Kafkaville, the rain never stops, and redemption is just another betrayal away...

Longlisted for the 2012 Guardian Newspaper “Not the Booker” Prize.

Breakfast at Midnight Details

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Author : Louis Armand

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From Reader Review Breakfast at Midnight for online ebook

Andrea says

"Kafkaville", a pornographic photographer, corpses, and an artscape of words. This is a slim attractively produced volume, but I fear that a likely readership of this 164 page prose poem will also be slim. Students of Kafka who expect themes of physical brutality and parent-child conflict may be less confronted by this work by a Prague university lecturer, writer and visual artist, than non-students of Kafka. If Kafka said "we need books that affect us like a disaster", then this book did that to me. It was disturbing, as I can only imagine it was intended to be. As I doubt it was the writer's intention to be "liked", but rather to create a disturbing work of art, I think he would feel he has achieved his aim by my reaction. The irony - and the author does refer to irony - is that I am now driven to reading something more saccharine than I would normally choose just to get over this.

Plus noir que noir.

Will there be a flicker of light in the final resolution, or won't there?

(Received as a Goodreads Giveaway. I chose to write a comment only and not to give it a rating. A work of art that, for me, was not designed to be "liked".)

Kirkus says

Škoda toho záv?ru - tahle snaha všechno do?íct a vysv?tlit na n?kolika posledních stranách celkový dojem trochu pokazila, ale jinak skv?le napsané, syrové, pochmurné...

Christie says

I got this book courtesy of 'good reads giveaway'

I found this book abit confusing at times and couldn't tell what was going on in places. But I was intrigued to find out what happens in the end.

Perry says

There is a contemporary 'epic' quality to this novel, even though it is less than 200 pages (it took four hours to read). Strangely Homeric... the book ends in 'Troy' (or a part of Prague called Troja). The Oresteia / the beginning of the Odyssey / Oedipus. The violence, too, has an epic quality, as if everything that happens is preordained and can only happen exactly that way... the spiral into catastrophe. The language, on the other hand is minimal... each sentence like an epigraph. Some memorable lines:

"A concertina of collapsed innards wheezing on to the pavement."

"... like some Luftwaffe pilot blitzed on pervitin."

"Something inside us collapses, irrevocably. After so many years this is all there is."

"... mother's shoes, covered in ants..."

"God spoke to them through their TV sets."

"There's no news like old news, muchacho."

"... a world where everything loved translates an injustice or tries to be a weapon."

"There was only time left."

Themes: The nightmare of memory, and of infinity... The search for mother, loathing of the father... Sorrow over actions committed, stripped to the core, held up before us in a pitiless light.

"Learn to be like a machine,' he tells me"

"The mistake is believing that anything remains the same."

"We vanquish, we decimate. Yet time remains closed."

"As far as I could see, the price of minding your own business is a kick in the crotch. It's that kind of world."

"Imagining, during all that time, something as trite and ridiculous as a love without shadows. And yet even now still clinging to it."

"Our lives, everything we had, was broken, the way a thing breaks when you smash it against a wall."

Jim says

I took a trip to Europe this summer. Thankfully, my vacation resembled nothing like Louis Armand's *Breakfast at Midnight* published by Equus Books.

Armand is many things: prolific poet, Joycean scholar and director of the Centre for Critical and Cultural Theory at the Department of Anglophone Literatures and Culture at Charles University in Prague, where he's lived since the early 1990s. In *Breakfast at Midnight*, Armand's adopted city is transformed into Kafkaville: a nightmarish landscape of crumbling buildings and relentless rain.

"Labyrinths of drunken shipping containers stacked up into canyons. Rivers of slurried rainwater. Backwash. Ziggurats of scrapped steel. The drizzle once again peters out. A flair of gray light briefly in the east. At our backs. Unheeded epiphany."

It's as if Armand has dropped Ulysses' Stephen Daedalus into a neo-noir novel, but James Joyce never wrote anything this dark. Haunted by the disappearance of a former lover, the photograph of a dead girl resurrects the ghosts of a gruesome past. Aided by his friend Blake, an underground artist who takes photos of corpses, the narrator attempts to connect the crimes. But every time Blake roars into the novel on his black Enfield motorcycle, more mayhem follows and the narrator sees himself "becoming part of the evidence for a crime that hasn't taken place yet."

The fragmented sentences and staccato prose hurry the reader from one grim scene to the next. Armand isn't trying to shock us into submission. With gorgeous prose and a nuanced narrative, he peels back the layers until there's nothing left but a city denuded of fake Old World charm and inhabited by souls debased beyond recognition, the very pulp of humanity. Armand has done to Prague what Genet achieves in *Our Lady of the Flowers*. *Breakfast at Midnight* is the most savage book I've read in years.

Gabriela says

I couldn't put it down! My favorite Armand novel to date. I think it's the first "ex-pat" book I've read that doesn't sound like it was written by an ex-pat. In other words, it's got authenticity and a feeling of reality, even though it's a multi-layered work of fiction. It seems to have tapped into something unique here, the psychic vibrations of Leppin, Ungar and those other literary denizens of the dark Prague of the early 20th century. In other words, it's right up my street!

Tabitha Peterson says

I won this book, I liked this book. But for me it didn't really make much sense. I was still waiting till the end to find out that guy's name, and I thought he was looking for Regen but he never found her. But other than it not making much sense it was a good book.

Alexandra says

The book was won on a giveaway on this website.

That being said, I honestly did not have high expectations for this book. However, I am in love with this book! It was fantastic.

Herzog Herzog says

Film noir for the mind's eye.

Cathie says

Dark, gritty, a masterpiece in the underbelly of how low a person can go and how life is neither fair or unfair. How circumstances and events never really leave us and how memories become embedded in our being. How everything is just...is.

A **disturbing** read, like being a voyeur into someone's dark twisted mind, that they cannot escape from. Harsh words, harsh writing, the seedier side of living. Definitely not for the faint of heart, the righteous, the moralists, those that pretend the bleak and the bad do not exist, or that all wrongs will eventually be righted. People sometimes exist because they don't die.

When you finish reading this book you want to take a shower for a very long long time.

Tara says

I received this book in a goodreads first reads giveaway.

Have you ever been genuinely afraid of a book? And I don't mean that in an ~ooh, ghosts~ way, but not wanting to take a wrong turn somewhere and accidentally stumble in the grimy world in which this book takes place? If you let yourself get sucked into this world, it'll take hours to shake the uneasy feeling you get from it. A lot of times you won't know what exactly is going on, but that's ok, because the protagonist is just as lost as you are. Recommended for readers who like their books creepy and surreal, and who are willing to surrender control to the text.

Catherine says

The '90s Prague novel that wasn't. Louis Armand's voyage through Kafkaville--Breakfast at Midnight--takes no prisoners in staking its provocative claim to what comes after Kafka, Kundera and Topol. This is light years from the expatriate mouthwash the New York Times used to lament had failed to measure up to Left-Bank Hemmingway and company. The production values are also very high: it is a beautifully designed book printed on gorgeous paper, proof that the publisher (Equus Press, like its Prague counterpart Twisted Spoon Press) has a genuine commitment to the art of book making. With evocative cover art by Czech collage artist Libor Fára, Breakfast at Midnight likewise nods to the heritage of Prague surrealism and Jindrich Styrský's *L'Édition érotique 69*. Seething with film noir intensity, violence, sex, the grimy post-revolution discontent of Prague's industrial underbelly--there's a moral viciousness to this book which makes complacent reading difficult if not impossible. The high-tempo prose carries us between urban psychogeographies of mind-bending paranoia and Amazonian jungle epiphanies... Guided by "Blake"--a half-Mephistopheles half-Dantesque figure who photographs corpses and seems intent on framing the novel's protagonist for a murder he just might have committed (or only imagines)--we are ultimately led to the upside-down beatific vision of a place in which redemption is unimaginable without betrayal. A parable for the times, Breakfast at Midnight updates the macabre vision of writers like Paul Leppin and Gustav Meyrink--with an edge.

Maddy says

PROTAGONIST: An unnamed fugitive

SETTING: Prague

RATING: 4.0

The unnamed protagonist of *BREAKFAST AT MIDNIGHT* is a young man from Prague who has been a fugitive for about a decade. When he was a boy, he became involved with a girl named Regen. Eventually their relationship became sexual, and he has been obsessed with her ever since. At one point in time, they lived together and he became abusive, which caused her to leave. Or did she? There are suggestions that he may have killed her. In the present day, he is searching for her endlessly.

He's caught in a dark place. One of his acquaintances, Blake, is a photographer who likes to take pictures of corpses. Their world is one of drugs and hedonism, but the fugitive never ceases searching for Regen or what

she represents. Often, we find our fugitive traveling in a hallucinatory haze which diminishes his or our ability to determine what is the truth of the situation. Being with Regen was the one time in his life where he felt valued and loved, although there were some major events that destroyed their psychological and physical intimacy, including a series of hideous confrontations with his heinous father.

Truthfully, I had trouble following the narrative. It was difficult to distinguish what was hallucinatory and what was reality. Surprisingly, I didn't mind the feeling of being a bit lost, as the language in the book was so beautiful. It consisted largely of poetic musings overlaid on a dark foundation, and it was a pleasure to be immersed in Armand's lyrical prose.

BREAKFAST AT MIDNIGHT is labeled as "acid noir", and in every way the book fits that description. As the book concludes, there seems to be some hope for a brighter future. Unfortunately, that is probably an illusion, for all roads that have been created in this world lead to doom and despair.

Denis5305 says

"Armand je inovator v mezinarnodnim meritku. Prekracuje zanry, cestuje s otevrenym pasem." John Kinsella, Sydney Morning Herald

"Armanduv precizni jasne vystihuje slozite myslenky." Edward Taylor, The Plaza

"Armandovi se podarilo napsat skvelou knihu a dosahnout brilantniho literatniho vyrazu." Ladislav Nagy, Hospodarske noviny

"Nevidana sracka" Zdenek Maly
